Encounter

NEGRO CRISIS

Richard H. Rovere
Harold R. Isaacs
Colin MacInnes

Margaret Shedd
Story

Irving Kristol
New Statesmanship

Paul Winter
Liverpool's Pilate

Robert Oppenheimer
Added Cubit

John Bayley
W. H. Auden

Diana Trilling
Marilyn Monroe

edited by
Stephen Spender &
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Encounter

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De gustibus EST disputandum

We may not be living in a great age of literature, but it is sometimes said to be a great age of literary criticism. Certainly the names of the leading critics on both sides of the Atlantic are as well known as those of most authors. Yet too often the standards to which these critics subscribe are insufficiently defined—perhaps because they have stated their ideas piecemeal over a number of works, perhaps because too long has passed since these ideas became known.

THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT has asked a number of influential English and American critics—among them Allen Tate, Harry Levin, George Steiner, René Wellek, John Wain, W. W. Robson, L. C. Knights, Graham Hough, Richard Hoggart—to summarize their present views in a group of signed articles, to be published as a special number on July 26. These will make clear what the various critical schools now stand for, and will show what kinds of literature the writers now specially value, and why.

Like it or not, critics are the people who set the pattern for ordinary day-to-day book reviewers and indirectly form the judgment of the reading public. If, more often than not, literary criticism means literary controversy, here are some of the reasons.

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Richard H. Rovere

Negro Crisis

Letter from the American Kitchen

The black man in this country has been sitting on the hot stove for nearly four hundred years.

—MALCOLM X, *Black Muslim leader, in an interview with Gordon Parks, a Negro writer and photographer, who was preparing a "photographic essay" on the Muslims for* Life.

The fire next time.

—JAMES BALDWIN, *taking a line from a spiritual ("God Gave Noah the rainbow sign/No more water, the fire next time") for the title of a book containing his celebrated essay, "Letter from a Region of My Mind," originally published in the* New Yorker.

If you can't stand the heat, you'd better stay out of the kitchen.

—HARRY S. TRUMAN, *on the impossibility of avoiding hot dispute in politics—and without any known reference to civil rights, civil liberties, the Negro problems, or the white problem.*

I'M NOT SURE, but I think the man on the stove right now is white, not black. It's hard to tell; the kitchen lighting is poor; smoke gets in your eyes. The chatter and clatter are terrible, too. Everyone is talking at once—at least everyone on the right side of this question. The segregationists aren't much given to talking: they stomp. When they do speak, they are brief. "I am the state," the Governor of Alabama has said, meaning that he embodies what he calls Alabama's "sovereignty." I don't suppose he was aware of his lack of originality. "This is about as close to heaven as any city can get," the Mayor of Jackson (Mississippi) told some reporters. The occasion for the remark was the announcement that the city was floating a large bond issue for expanded jail facilities in anticipation of spreading civil-rights demonstrations. But that sort of thing is heard very little; the other sort of thing is heard all the time. Listen to Ivan Allen, Jr., the Mayor of Atlanta, Georgia: "[The] peaceful and permanent dissolution of racial tensions is a truly All-American endeavour." The mayor is a Georgia peach and a great one for bi-racial committees to desegregate this, that, and the other thing.

The voice most frequently heard, and heard about, is that of James Baldwin, who keeps saying that no matter how rapidly the Ivan Allens and the bi-racial committees multiply, no one, white or black, can be certain that the whole place won't go up in flames. The fire *this* time, maybe. Our sins may be too great to be washed away; only burning will suffice. Between chokes and gasps, people of all sorts are telling one another how very right Baldwin is, how beautifully he puts things, and how thoroughly justified he is in saying what he says. I've never seen or heard anything like it. This powerful, despairing critic of American culture has suddenly become one of its heroes. *The New York Times, Time, Life, Newsweek, Look,* and the television networks print and broadcast everything he says. "Do you know Baldwin?" the Attorney-General of the United States asks

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an interviewer. "He's terrific."[1] It is a bit as if one of the Romanovs had said, *circa* 1915, that he got quite a kick out of reading Leon Trotsky. So far as I have been able to hear, Baldwin's only serious critics have been a few of his intellectual peers—F. W. Dupee in the New York *Review of Books* and Lionel Abel in *Partisan Review*. Abel didn't much like what he regarded as the central message, which, in his paraphrase, was " Help us save you—from us!" (True—and surely an unattractive proposition—but then isn't it what power always says. Isn't it the ultimate appeal that all parents make to all children? "Do what I say so I won't have to do what I say I'll do.") Hardly anyone else has taken offence. Baldwin is the prophet and philosopher of anti-"gradualism," which is an o.k. role, since it is difficult to find anyone who is for what Baldwin is against. It can be stated as a general proposition that putting aside those who stand nowhere, Americans who aren't segregationists are do-it-now integrationists. Within the last few hours, the Supreme Court, the Vice-President, and the *New York Herald Tribune* have said that gradualism is for the birds. "It is time today," the *Herald Tribune* says, "It is time now, when there is no more time." The fire now, or any minute now.

[1] Probably apocryphal, though it was printed in the *New York Post* for June 6th. But one can hear Robert Kennedy saying it to someone at some time, if not to William V. Shannon of the *Post* on or about June 5th. In late May, when things were very rough, Kennedy sought out Baldwin in New York, and a meeting was set up, with Baldwin and several other prominent Negroes "exchanging views" with Kennedy and Burke Marshall, an Assistant Attorney-General who has fought the good fight in the South since early 1961.

The meeting was, to say the least, unproductive. It began most inauspiciously. The "prominent Negroes" were very prominent indeed: among them Baldwin; the gifted playwright Lorraine Hansberry; the singer Harry Belafonte; and a distinguished psychologist, Kenneth Clark. The Negro side, however, was dominated by one who was "prominent" in quite another sense—Jerome Smith, a young Freedom Rider who bore scars not only of the spirit but of the flesh. By the account I have received, the literary and academic types deferred to this young man as fireside warriors and chatterers must always defer to firemen. The pen may be mightier than the sword, but the pen finds this hard to believe. Anyway, the Freedom Rider said, at the outset, "It almost makes me vomit just to be here." There followed a good deal of kitchen chatter which Baldwin later said, revealed not so much a "difference of opinion" —the newspaper phrase—as a "gulf."

No doubt. Baldwin is a Harlem poet, Kennedy a Washington politician. Baldwin is concerned with God, guilt, shame, sin, and retribution. An ocean rather than a gulf separates him from Kennedy, who doubtless loves God but is at present concerned with remedies, deals, votes, pride, attribution, and also Justice, which he is the head of the Department of. I'd be inclined to think that such a gulf is narrow enough for leaping, but in any case the meeting, it seems, was a frost, with overtones of fire. After two hours of exposure to the Attorney-General, one participant (according to the account I got) said, "I think I'll go get me a white man." "I'll see that you have a gun," said one of the warriors of the pen. They were, of course, announcing their disgust, not their immediate design.

It's IMPOSSIBLE to hear everything that's being said. People won't quiet down even when the President speaks. For as long as I can remember, we liberals have been saying how helpful it would be if the sitting President would put the "moral prestige" of his great office behind the Negro drive for justice and equality. I'm not certain it would ever have been as helpful as we thought, but our instincts surely were sound. It is somehow shameful for a President *not* to endorse what is so clearly right. In 1960, John F. Kennedy seemed certain to be the man who would do what we asked. He had talked a great deal, and in many connections, of the uses of the Presidency's "moral prestige," and he was, I think, the first Presidential candidate (as he is, now, the first President) ever to be committed to the view that *all* segregation is morally indefensible and politically intolerable. When he took office, the cat seemed to get his tongue. To be sure, he said the proper things about school integration and the like, and he was, in press conferences, clearer and more courageous than his immediate predecessor; but he did not, as he had promised he would, lead the fight to "wipe out all traces of discrimination." This failure, which was more than an oversight, vexed many people. "Why doesn't he *speak out*? Why doesn't he *say something*?," my eldest daughter, who is nineteen and very angry, kept saying to me, accusingly, as if my membership in Kennedy's generation gave me some special responsibility in the matter, which perhaps it did. Well, just the other day the President got his tongue back from the cat and did *say something*. He went down to Tennessee, when the Birmingham cauldron was still hot, and told the young gentlemen of Vanderbilt University that in his opinion the Negroes, who had taken to the

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streets in that hell of Bessemer and Jim Crow that boosts itself as "The Magic of the South," were plainly acting "in the highest traditions of American freedom."

This seemed to me an event of extraordinary importance—not simply because a President had at last said what so many had been beseeched to say but because one had said it in circumstances that gave his words, or so at least it seemed, a heightened meaning. I wondered—publicly, in an article in the *New Yorker*—if the President had really been aware of the full significance of what he had said. When we had all been calling for a Presidential commitment to civil rights, we had in mind a straightforward endorsement of the Supreme Court's motto—"Equal Justice Under Law." We used to implore General Eisenhower to go beyond pointing out that the Supreme Court had ruled on public-school segregation and put the authority of his office behind the law on the ground that the law was a just one. He would never say it. Kennedy said it and said much more, for Birmingham had changed many things. The demonstrations there were not essentially a search for justice under law. They were in fact part of a resistance movement. The movement was extra-legal—civilly disobedient. Justice was being sought beyond the law, and in defiance of it. And here was the Chief Magistrate cloaking it all in the Stars and Stripes; making room in the American pantheon for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; and telling what Baldwin calls the "white power structure" that it wasn't just the ghosts of John Brown and Harriet Beecher Stowe they were hosing down but those of George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson.

WHAT HAPPENED THEN? Why, nothing at all happened. Hardly anyone seems to have heard him. No one, except your correspondent and a *New York Times* man who covered the speech, has attached the slightest importance to it; and so far as I can tell no one listened to us. Kennedy might as well have saved his breath to cool his porridge. In part, I think, the explanation of all this is that in this situation—as in many other contemporary ones—no one gives a damn about language unless it is charged with great heat and violence and what Lionel Abel described as the modish "cult of utterness." (Abel's remarks on Baldwin turned up in a review of William Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*, a work he thought had certain things in common with Baldwin's essay.) And it is not only the victimised who seem to prefer the fire to the water. A couple of evenings after the President's speech, I found myself addressing the faculty of a fashionable boys' school (a posh, expensive place whose best known alumnus happens to be William F. Buckley, Jr., the ideologue of young ultra-conservatives). The masters, mostly, were young, and they looked to me about as privileged and lily-white a lot as their students. I was with them to discuss other matters, but we soon enough got off on Topic A. When did I suppose, one of them asked me right off, was Kennedy going to *say something*? I told them I thought he had said quite a bit at Vanderbilt two days earlier. What on earth did I mean? What was so special about that speech? I thought of saying something about the need of some people to put aside *Dissent, Hudson Review*, and the other little magazines long enough to read the *New York Times*, but instead I quoted from memory. First there were blank faces, then grinning ones. Did I call that *speaking out*? Certainly, I said and what did they call it? A lot of *nothing* was their answer. Was it possible, they wanted to know, that I *really* attached any importance to that sort of drivel. I confessed that I was rapidly reaching the point at which no statement at all seemed to mean very much, but on the other hand this whole affair did have a history and it seemed to me—one cultivated young instructor ran out of patience altogether. Oh, for God's sake, don't give us that history crap.... Get with it now—in the 'Sixties.... Things had to be *done*. In that case, I asked, why had they been so concerned to have the President say anything? And what could he say that would satisfy them? But I had lost them.

THE IMPATIENCE WITH LANGUAGE less "utter" than Baldwin's is not limited to the young militants. The National Council of Churches, which speaks for most of American Protestantism, has just announced that it is fed up with talk. By a unanimous vote, its General Board has resolved that its policy henceforth will be to encourage and organise "demonstrations and direct action." "Words and declarations are no longer useful in this struggle unless accompanied by sacrifice and commitment." Commitment, said the Rev. Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, speaking for the Council, "includes being on the receiving end of a fire hose." (One more try with water.) The decision, I think, reflects a

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sound understanding of the present state of things. The kitchen chatter is interesting and sometimes arresting, but it is the cooking that really counts. It is not that talk is idle or unavailing. It is not that words are cheap; Baldwin's certainly aren't, and neither, as I see it, are the Attorney-General's. It is simply that for a time at least the resources of talk—including its most solemn form, the law—are inadequate. Last month, for example, the Supreme Court ruled that segregation at lunch-counters could not be upheld by local law or police power. It did not establish an obligation on the part of proprietors to serve Negroes; it merely said that Negroes could not be prosecuted for requesting service—by "sitting-in"—because it was intolerable that the law be used to uphold inequality. The Court's words in its several rulings were clarifying and dignifying, and they will not be without effect. They will speed the pace of integration. But the law is no match for the Negro resistance when what is wanted is results. By the time the Supreme Court bespoke itself on lunch-counter segregation, the practice (according to a report in the *New Republic*) had been ended in 201 Southern cities—the consequence of direct action or of the threat of it. There are now bills before Congress that would make segregation illegal in almost any realm that can be regarded as "inter-state commerce," and in this country to-day there is practically nothing that cannot be so regarded. It is considered altogether possible that they will become law before the year is out. But by the time the year is out, if the resistance grows as it is expected to in the coming months, much of the work of the law will have been done. Furthermore, if the bill does become law, it will be one more achievement for direct action. Before the resistance put on its most impressive display to date, the one in Birmingham, the administration had no plans for civil-rights legislation in this session of Congress. It felt that it hadn't the strength to beat back Southern opposition. The strength it now feels it has was born of the resistance.

THE NEGRO RESISTANCE—a white outsider imagines—satisfies needs that could never be satisfied by law, no matter how equal the justice it provided, no matter how swiftly and efficiently the justice was administered. Conceivably the law could, in time, do away with all institutionalised forms of segregation. But not all segregation is institutionalised, and not all that hurts the American Negro is segregation. He suffers outrages that no court could ever deal with and that no one would want any court to deal with. The presence on earth of Eugene "Bull" Connor, the Birmingham Police Commissioner, is such an outrage. Listening even to the sparing exercise of free speech by the Governor of Alabama and the Mayor of Jackson is another. (The Governor a while back consented to a television interview. A reporter asked him if he really and truly regarded Negroes as human beings. "Certainly," he answered, "and I said I did during my campaign.") No amends for these indignities can be made in courts or legislatures. The only possible remedy is the counter-assertion of dignity and pride that is made by the active resistance.

THE FIRE NEXT TIME? Perhaps. I'm in no position to say. As Baldwin would surely tell me, I live a terribly segregated life. I can hear him only when he screams and threatens, and even then, he insists, I can't really hope to understand what he is saying. He tells me that I am so ignorant, so frightened, so corrupted, that I cannot even say anything about myself that can make any sense. ("Therefore," he writes, after insisting that I can know *nothing* about him, "whatever white people do not know about Negroes reveals, precisely and inexorably, what they do not know about themselves.") Well, as I have said, a good many white people are telling one another that Baldwin knows the drill, that he has the inside dope, and I wonder how he would explain the triumph of fear and ignorance that is to be found in their quick acceptance of his truths. Anyway, even if Baldwin thought well of me, I would not care to say with any confidence that the kitchen won't explode. The Negro resistance certainly isn't going to fall apart; it gains strength all the time; as Robert Kennedy might say, the multiplier-effect is terrific. There may breed a counter-resistance of some power and then—bang! There are moves afoot, in the legislatures of the sovereign states, to amend the Constitution in ways that would effectively break up the federal union, "legalise" segregation, and make a real Louis Quatorze of the Governor of Alabama.

For my own part, I *think* it's going to work out in some other way. Can I say, without sounding crackers, that I am at this moment—mid-June, 1963—quite proud of my countrymen? I would cite first of all the Negro resist-

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ance. It has been magnificent. Its leadership has been politically mature, strategically resourceful, and strong. The ranks have responded to superb leadership with courage and discipline. If I am right in supposing that it is their pride and dignity as well as their pain the Negroes wish to display, they have done it most impressively. We are being advised—by Baldwin and a great many others—that this leadership has seen its best days and that it may at any moment lose its grip on the ranks and be replaced by men of violence. Maybe so. In any case, we would still have a record of famous victories by Dr. King and his admirable field captains. It has been a splendid hour, with many heroes. What is one to say of those who brought out the dogs and manned the hoses? Well, the record is bad enough as it is, and to have to deal with "Bull" Connor would be an affront even if he used no dogs or hoses. But it does seem to me that someone should point out that even in the most benighted parts of the benighted South, there has been, so far, more restraint that one could reasonably have hoped for in advance. The white police have been checking white hoodlums and hooligans; the dogs have been on leashes. When I spoke to the prep-school masters, I provoked them to scorn and mirth by pointing out that thirty years ago white mobs were hanging, shooting, and beating Negroes to death at the rate of one every three weeks. What was I trying to say, they asked? That in thirty years we had stopped *murder*? Is that *progress*? It's nothing to hand out medals for, but it is a fact, and it is, I think, important to bear in mind that a generation ago the *entire* civil-rights programme of a great liberal President was a federal anti-lynching bill, which he never got passed. The white South is resisting the Negro resistance, but it is not confronting non-violence with violence. Is this simply because it fears the Negro militants? I think not. I think it is partly because it has come to know something of guilt and partly because it fears the rest of the country and, in particular, the federal power.

WHAT ABOUT the rest of the country? One cannot say that among the broad masses there is a rage for justice or a passion for equality. Clearly there is not. There is an almost suffocating apathy in this republic to-day (not merely on this question but on just about every other one). Nothing seems to arouse the people very much. A number of politicians were certain, early this year, that public opinion was so worked up about Fidel Castro that they could build winning campaigns around the Cuban issue; the opinion polls showed that the politicians had been vastly overrating the public's alarm over Communism ninety miles from God's country. The people don't seem much concerned about unemployment; as our disappointed Secretary of Labour said a few weeks back, not even the unemployed are squawking. But there are white Americans—millions of them, I think—who have now been aroused by the shame of segregation as they have been aroused by nothing else in their lives. The young are especially angry. I was put out by the contempt of the youthful generation, but I was at the same time heartened by it. *Noblesse oblige* has been a great force for good in the world, and it is, I think, a very large resource in this country to-day. It is easy to raise an eyebrow when James Baldwin is taken up by popcult—trailed by a *Life* photographer, requested by *Time* to drop a few pearls before the swine, becoming a bit of a bore by turning up all over the place—but all this suggests that there is some decency and some social vitality in several of those institutions that make Dwight Macdonald sick. By and large, it seems to me, those institutions that ought to be focussing American attention on this gravest of American problems have been doing it, and doing it in many cases with great intelligence and imagination. Just about the entire Establishment is lined up on the right side.

It may all come to nothing, or to fire. My uneducated hunch is that it will come to something good. This problem is almost certainly the largest one this society has ever faced; it is, too, one that no modern society I know of has faced and successfully solved. It is not, however, altogether different in kind from others we have lived through. There was a time in the 'thirties when it seemed as if the labour movement would be clubbed to death in this country. All power appeared to be ranged against it, except that of the government (and at the time of the great sit-down strikes the government began to back away). Within a couple of years, though, the struggle was over, and suddenly the problems were those that follow in the wake of success. I do not think this struggle can be quite that quickly and satisfactorily ended, but I believe the chances are better than ever that victory will follow victory from now on.

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Harold R. Isaacs

Blackness and Whiteness

A Name to Go By

THE ENTIRE HISTORY of Negroes in America has conspired to give them a group identity that was negative or blurred or both. When James Baldwin titles his book *Nobody Knows My Name*, he is referring to the fact that a Negro's individuality as a particular person is lost in the white world behind the identifying external mask he wears as a "Negro." This mask was fashioned out of all that went into the struggle for survival in a hostile white society. It was shaped mainly out of the myths and stereotypes created by whites for their self-appeasement and so largely accepted by blacks for their self-defence. Hence the Uncle Tom, the Sambo, the Stepin Fetchit, and all the other figures in this particular wax museum. But the problem of the Negro group identity is much more than the problem of this synthetic group personality. Nobody may know "who" the "Negro" is, but this is at least partly because the person who is a Negro has also been kept by these circumstances from knowing who he is himself. Hardly anything illustrates this more dramatically than the fact that even as "Negro" he has had enormous difficulty in deciding what to call himself, what group name to go by.

When one begins to trace the matter back in time— and it goes back nearly 200 years—one finds that the usages have varied and that preferences and arguments have swelled and swirled around a whole collection of labels: blacks, Africans, negroes (with the small *"n"*), Negroes (with the capitalisation which became general usage after a long struggle that ended only some 30 years ago and has still not ended in much of the South), Coloureds, Coloured People, Coloured Americans, People of Colour, Ethiopians, Racemen, Negro-Saxons, African Americans, Afrio-Americans, Afro-Americans, Aframericans, American Negroes, Negro Americans. Even a brief look into these differences is the beginning of discovery of some of the real inwardness of the Negro identity problem.

In the present generation, the widest common practice settled on "Negro," an embattled word which has held its own against almost constant assault. Differences, however, persist, both in opinions and usage. The term "coloured" is still used almost as widely and not always interchangeably. The term "Negro" is still subject to challenge from various directions and the argument about it, kept alive by its inner essence and re-kindled by all our current events, still goes on. Black nationalists keep insisting on "Afro-American" or just plain "African." The push of this issue to the extremes of non-identity is illustrated at one end of the spectrum by the common use of the term "group" or "group man" (in which context whites would be "the majority group" or simply "the other group"), and at the other by the Black Muslims, who reject "Negro" and insist on "black" or "black men" but carry the Negro individual's identity confusion to the ultimate dramatic extreme by requiring all their followers to abandon their family names (because they all come from white origins) and to substitute the most literal symbol of non-being—the Black Muslim calls himself by a first name followed simply by *"X."* There is, incidentally, a long history of cults with Islamic labels among Negroes; the predecessor of the present movement, founded in 1913, required its followers to "refuse any longer to be called Negroes, black folk, coloured people, or Ethiopians" but to be called "Asiatics" or "Moors" or "Moorish Americans."

Like so many other critical aspects of the story of Negroes in America, this too is a subject still awaiting its author. Many Negro writers, scholars, and public figures have contributed their views to this controversy over a long period of time, but almost always necessarily in the form of an argument for this or that name. My own search produced no systematic study of the matter but considerable scattered material, some of it from the last century, some out of yesterday's newspaper or magazine. You can read passionate but closely-argued debates of

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more than 50 years ago between such men as J. W. E. Bowen, editor of the *Voice of the Negro*, and T. Thomas Fortune, editor of *The New York Age*, an argument which at the time led the *New York Tribune* (on June 10, 1906) to feature an entire page of solicited statements under the heading: "WHAT IS THE PROPER NAME FOR THE BLACK MAN IN AMERICA?" Or come down to the 1930s when the fight to win a capital "N" for "Negro" reached its climax (*The New York Times* magisterially and ceremonially granted proper noun capitalisation on March 15, 1930, with a heralding editorial announcement) and read the contributions of the salty-penned George Schuyler of *The Pittsburgh Courier* and the strong views of Professor Kelly Miller of Howard University, and letters to assorted editors by assorted people with many different assorted opinions on the subject. There is an occasional attempt at a summary of the argument and, in the setting of his particular interest in the American language, H. L. Mencken once examined the matter at considerable length. The subject is treated with uniquely rich detail by James W. Ivy in an article called "The Semantics of Being Negro in the Americas," but he deals chiefly with the race labels in the Portuguese and Spanish idioms of Latin America, referring sufficiently to race labels used by and about Negroes in the United States to show how deep and far the similarities go.

THE SLAVE TRADERS called their African cargo *negros* or simply *blacks*. Ivy reports that "negro" came to be used synonymously with *slave*. He locates an early example of this blending in a 1721 dictionary. A century later in 1819 a South Carolina court, indeed, held that the word "negro" had the fixed meaning of a "slave." This has been the most-commonly cited source for objection to the use of "Negro." It has been seen, as various writers have noted, as "a badge of shame" hopelessly freighted with its "slave origin and its consequent degradation." Closely associated with this idea and equally common as a reason for rejecting the word is the slippage of "Negro" into "nigger," the term that carries in it all the obloquy and contempt and rejection which whites have inflicted on blacks in all this time. This, many have suggested, may be "the clue to the whole business."[1]

But it becomes clear even from a brief look that there are many other clues, much more to the business than this. For Negroes the issue of the name to go by has been deeply entwined with all the deepest and unresolved issues of the flight-from-self imposed upon them by their whole history in this society, of colour—that is, of relative lightness and relative darkness, of the ways in which they have related to their African origins, of all the ways in which they have striven to be both in and of the white society from which they were so consistently and so completely excluded.

The available record begins with the free Negroes who had come up out of the slave system by various means and had begun to group and assert themselves at the time of the American Revolution and the establishment of the American Republic. The 1790 census noted 59,000 free Negroes in the population and although still called "Negroes" by whites, they had begun to distinguish themselves from the slaves by using the adjective "African." This was the name they attached to the new institutions they created for themselves at this time when they found themselves excluded from the established similar institutions of the whites. Thus the African Baptist Church (1779), the first African Lodge of Masons (1787), the Free African Society (1787), the African Methodist Episcopal Church (1796) and others. The first schools established for their children were called "Free African Schools" in New York and elsewhere.

By 1830, however, when free Negroes met

[1] Roi Ottley, *New World A'Coming* (1943). Ottley goes on to remark, as have many others, that "the term nigger is used by Negroes quite freely when out of the earshot of whites, sometimes having a good deal of affectionate meaning to them." This way of turning an insulting word into something casual, light, even affectionate or humorous is a usage not uncommon in various quarters with such comparable words as *kike, wop, mick, spic*. This is a way of lightening the quality of the word, like Cyrano talking about his own nose, or saying-it-and-smiling, but it never really relieves it of its burden of contempt and self-contempt.

Even more hateful-sounding, incidentally, is the word *Nigra*, which is the way "Negro" comes out when slurred, deliberately or otherwise, in Southern accents. Negroes in Atlanta told me with much cynical amusement about a white politician seeking Negro votes in a local election who was drilled sedulously to say *Nee-gro* when talking to Negro audiences and who reverted to his more normal *Nigra* when talking to whites. The word *Negress* is almost the most objectionable of all, being strongly held to be associated with both the auction block and with animals. It may be taken as a recent sign of the times that the *Columbia Record* of Columbia, South Carolina, accepted the protest of a group of local Negro women and announced it would cease using the term *Negress*. "We were not aware that the term was offensive," the editor wrote. Columbia's other paper, *The State*, ignored the protest—*New York Amsterdam News*, April 21, 1962.

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together in their urgent common interest, the adjective "African" had been replaced by "Coloured." When they met in Philadelphia that year they organised the "Convention of Coloured Citizens of America." In general by that time they had begun to refer to themselves as "coloured people" or "people of colour." Students of the period have apparently not dealt with this shift in name and I do not know what a new search through old papers would turn up on this score; but I am willing to guess that at least two sets of circumstances would be found to be part of the explanation.

The first is that in the intervening time a concerted movement had been started to get free Negroes to migrate back to Africa whereas the overwhelming majority of free Negroes, especially in the Northern cities, wanted no part of any such migration. By the process of self-purchase, manumission, and the efforts of various early abolition groups, and by natural increase, the number of free Negroes had risen by this time to 319,000, more or less evenly divided between northern and southern cities. Their freedom was tenuous and under constant threat. Their hardships attracted a certain kind of pious Northern white benevolence under which transportation back to Africa was seen as the best solution to the problem. On the other hand, the sheer existence of free Negroes was felt as a growing threat to slaveholding interests and this attracted a certain non-pious Southern malevolence which seized readily upon the same idea. These interests were wedded in 1817 in the founding of the American Colonisation Society which received the ready support of certain state legislatures. Some Southern free Negroes accepted the Society's offer (in many instances manumission was made contingent upon willingness to sign up for the return to Africa) and from among these came the first boatloads of migrants who founded Liberia in 1821. By 1830 the number shipped by the Society totalled only just over 1,400. There was an independent and recurring impulse among some despairing Northern free Negroes to look to Africa as a way out of hopelessness in America, but most northern free Negroes vehemently opposed the Society's programme and denounced it in strong terms, beginning in 1817 and every year thereafter in meetings in many cities. It seems reasonable to assume, therefore, that the label "African" was abandoned, at least by Northern free Negroes, because they were intent upon remaining Americans and rejected the schemes to send them, as "Africans," back to Africa.

[2] E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro in the United States* (New York, 1949).

But the choice of the term "people of colour" or "coloured people" to replace "African" suggests the second set of circumstances clearly involved in this change. The term "African" had been used mainly by free Negroes in the North, most of whom had gained their freedom in the early years of the Republic. The clusters of free Negroes in the South, especially those in Charleston, South Carolina and New Orleans, came out of a much older process. The first differentiation among the slaves was that made between the field hands and the house servants, and from among the latter came the issue of unions between white masters and slave women, often treated as a second family, given their freedom, means, and education. It was the descendants of such groups who developed their own special caste position (which included slaveholding of their own) and whose most visible mark of caste was their lighter colour. This community in Charleston in 1790 formed not an *African* association, but the *Brown* Fellowship Society "which admitted only brown men of good character who paid an admission fee of fifty dollars."[2] In New Orleans the even older and more aristocratic mixed descendants of the older French and Spanish settlers became a distinct group in the population and were called the *gens de couleur*. It is from this term and from this group, carrying with it all the connotations of higher caste associated with non-blackness and mixed ancestry, that the vague and essentially non-descriptive term *coloured* or *people of colour* was derived. With its adoption by the Northern free Negroes in place of "African" during the decade before 1830, it became the term of preferred and polite usage.

Although this term became one of general use and has persisted down through time until now, it has never stood alone or uncontradicted. At the very beginning, in the 1840s and 1850s, when some of the most militant and anti-migrationalist free leaders, despairing of ever gaining a decent status in America, became advocates of migration to Africa, there was some effort made to revive the use of the term "African." Whites generally continued to use "Negro" although the abolitionist movement generally adopted "coloured." Lincoln, Carl Sandburg notes in his biography, was attacked by Southern sympathisers for shifting from "negroes," a term he still used in 1859, to "coloured men" in 1860 and "free Americans of African descent" in 1862. Frederick Douglass generally used "coloured" in accordance with the preferred practice, but also used "Negro" and "black" as part of his effort to re-establish a sense of Negro identity. He used "Negro," he told a white audience in 1854, "precisely in

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the sense that you use 'Anglo-Saxon'." In referring to individual persons he continued as a rule to use "coloured."

BY WHATEVER NAME he was called, the Negro in the closing decades of the 19th century found his status as a man and as a citizen driven lower and lower. It was at this time, in 1880, that T. Thomas Fortune came up with his effort to get Negroes and the society at large to accept the new term "Afro-American." Fortune wanted to get away from "Negro," remarks Kelly Miller, because of "the historical degradation and humiliation attached to it" and, it is suggested, especially to get away from "nigger." Fortune wrote: "Until we get this race designation properly fixed in the language and literature of the country, we shall be kicked and cuffed and sneered at as a common noun, sufficiently and contemptuously characterised by the vulgar term...." But Fortune wanted to do a lot more than merely do away with a vulgar term. He meant his term "Afro-American" to describe the different physical type that had been created in America by mixture with the white, as "a new race in this country approximating much nearer the American than the African type." The term "Negro," he wrote, "...has been used to describe black people of Africa. It is not a term definitive of race affinities but of physical peculiarities of race of which colour is the invariable index." For Fortune too, this strongly suggests, a critical element in choosing the name to go by was the element of colour and the distinctively "Negro" physical characteristics. The term "Afro-American," despite Fortune's doughty championship and its adoption later as the name of the Baltimore *Afro-American*, never gained any wide measure of acceptance among Negroes and none at all in the general currency of the language.

But the argument, largely centering on the continued use of "Negro," went on and on, acquiring peculiar force around the years of the turn of the century. Booker T. Washington advocated the use of "Negro" and opponents of the word charged this against his general posture of submission. But along came W. E. B. Du Bois, no submitter, who not only espoused "Negro" but used "black" and stressed colour almost obsessively in his own special struggle for the reassertion of Negro identity. It did not matter, he pointed out, whether they were called "African" or "Ethiopian" or "coloured," but what mattered was who and what you were and where you stood in the society. This was the view expressed by many other leaders over the years, although the NAACP, founded in 1909 by Du Bois and others followed the preferred usage among the middle and upper class Negroes and used "Coloured." The Garvey movement a decade later did use "Negro" in its name (the United Negro Improvement Association) but much preferred "black" as a direct expression of its explicit and strong racial chauvinism.

MOST OF THE PRESENT GENERATION of Negro adults grew up simply accepting these confused and divided usages without questioning what they might mean. Among those I interviewed, I noticed a fairly typical cleavage: members of what one might call the more traditional middle or upper class among Negroes almost invariably used "coloured" and a few had strong views on the subject ("I never class myself as 'Negro'" said an ex-college president. "I had to cease to be a 'Negro' in order to be a man.") The stronger "race man" types had opposite views. ("My father always believed we should use 'Negro' meaning black," said a noted labour leader. "As a term it has more strength than 'coloured'.") More generally the younger and more sophisticated either used "Negro" alone or used it interchangeably with "coloured." When asked, most of them said they were aware of the disputes over the matter but did not think them important. Most commonly, they said they thought the objection to "Negro" was its closeness to "nigger." Only a few thought there might be layers to the matter deeper than this, and they only when asked. "I hadn't thought," said a noted educator, "that any matter of colour was involved in this, but it is quite possible. Some four or five years ago there was a motel sign up somewhere near here (Atlanta) which said 'for Negroes.' A taxi driver sneered as we went by it one day: 'He ought to know he won't get coloured people's business with that sign.' And the fact is that the sign was changed sometime after that to 'for Coloured.'"

Another well-known scholar said: "I am sure there is something about colour in the use of 'Negro' and 'Coloured,' though it is not always at the tip of people's consciousness."

In fact, just below the level of that more common consciousness, the issue of name-confusion is intimately locked with all the central issues of Negro identity-confusion; the flight from blackness, the flight from Negro-ness itself, the yearning to be white.

Black Stand Back

THE FLIGHT FROM BLACKNESS and the yearning to be white have had a major part in shaping the Negro group identity down through the generations. It involved the more or less total acceptance of the white man's estimate

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of the black man, the more or less total rejection of self. This was a widely-shared experience and it took on many forms, but it would be hard to find a more explicit statement of it than the one made in a contribution to the argument over names in 1913 by William H. Ferris, author of a two-volume study called *The African Abroad*. Ferris had an entry of his own in the name stakes; he wanted the term *Negrosaxon* because he believed salvation for the black man lay in his complete adoption of white Anglo-Saxonism.

> "The Anglo-Saxon civilisation is the highest and best yet evolved in the history of the human race, [he wrote. On the other hand] the word 'Negro' originally referred to a native African black, who was a barbarian and a savage.... 'Negro' calls up a black, kinky-haired and heavy-featured being.... [It] suggests physical and spiritual kinship to the ape, the monkey, the baboon, the chimpanzee, the orang-outang and gorilla.... It is up to the Negrosaxon or Coloured man to say which badge he shall wear, the badge of monkeyhood or of manhood, the badge of brutehood and bestiality or the badge of humanity. ... What causes more of a shudder of repulsion to run through the frame than the phrase 'a big burly Negro ... ?' The coloured man who brands himself as a Negro thereby catalogues and labels himself as a being who is outside the pale of humanity."

Fortunately, Ferris goes on, most of the coloured people in America were brought inside the pale of humanity by blood mixture. "While the coloured people of America cannot boast of the manner in which they came by their white blood, they at least have this consolation—most of the Caucasian blood that flows in Negro-saxon veins is the blood of Southern aristocrats." Ferris believed that a full embrace of Anglo-Saxonism could save even a black man. Citing some notable examples (like Alexander Crummell and Kelly Miller), he went on:

> He cannot bleach out his complexion or straighten his hair, or sharpen his nose, or thin his lips. But in mind and character and disposition he must become a black white man. After the Negro-saxon has been made over into the likeness of the white man he can hope to be made over into the image of God.

This is, of course, a familiar phenomenon which has also been called "identification with the aggressor." In wanting to become like those who have dominated, despised, and rejected them, Negroes have been behaving like members of many other dominated, despised, and rejected groups. All our various cultures and sub-cultures are filled with examples. It became part of the common experience of certain sections of the colonised peoples during the Western imperial epoch; it was even shared for quite a while by certain kinds of Chinese. In the American culture, it has been plainly visible in the experience of successive immigrant groups as they went about relating themselves to the dominant group in the society. Jews, who have been despised and rejected for a longer time than anybody, have a number of chapters of this kind in their long history. Bruno Bettelheim's interpretation of what happened to some Jews in the Nazi extermination camps suggests a recent and extreme example. More familiar and more common has been the behaviour attached to the idea of "assimilation," the effort to shed all vestiges of the Jewish identity by disappearing entirely into the dominant group. The equivalent among Negroes is, of course, "passing" into the white population. But to "pass" is possible only for relatively few.[3] More generally people have to find other ways of assimilating the majority view of themselves and of expressing the self-rejection and self-hatred that follows from this. Among Negroes the forms and modes of this process are endlessly varied. One of the most pervasive of these has been the institution of colour caste which raised "whiteness" to the highest value in all aspects of life. This meant everything pertaining to civilisation, culture, religion, and human worth. It became among Negroes an intricate system of social, group and personal relationships based directly on degrees of relative darkness and other degrees of physical Negro-ness, the shape and kinds of features, hair, lips, and nose which were "good" if they resembled the white's, "bad" if they did not. This was carried to the point of using artificial means—hair-straighteners and skin-whiteners—in the effort to close the gap between the two.

In coming to terms with himself, every Negro individual has had in one way or another to cope with the infinity of ways in which "white" is elevated above "black" in our culture. The association of white and black with light and dark and the translation of these quantities of of light into polarities of "good" and "evil" and "beauty" and "ugliness" has taken place in the conventions and languages of many cultures, but in few has this conversion of physical facts into religious and aesthetic values been worked harder than in our own.

"Black" and "White"

THESE CONCEPTS and usages of black evil and white goodness, of beautiful fairness and ugly blackness, are deeply imbedded in the

[3] Gunnar Myrdal, *American Dilemma* (1944). Walter White, longtime secretary of the NAACP who himself had this choice, dealt with it in a novel, *Flight* (1926).

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Bible, are folded into the language of Milton and Shakespeare, indeed are laced into almost every entwining strand of the art and literature in which our history is clothed. They can be traced down the columns of any dictionary from white hope to whitewash, from the black arts to the Black Mass, from black-browed and blackhearted to blacklist and blackmail. "I am black *but* comely," sang the Shulamite maiden to the daughters of Jerusalem and on that *but* hangs a whole great skein of our culture.

The Bible's central theme of good and evil is constantly represented by the symbolism of "black" and "white" and "dark" and "light." In the Scriptures the use of "black" as a negative word is consistent throughout, standing for sin, ignorance, wickedness, and evil. "My skin is black," cries Job in his great self-arraignment, using this figure to show how heavy was his burden of sin. Again in *Job*: "Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it; let a cloud dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it." Or in *Jeremiah*: "For this shall the earth mourn and the heavens above be black." And in the *Epistle of Jude* the famous phrase about "the wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever."

The word "white" is apparently used a good deal less in the Bible, and less consistently. Thus "the great white throne" of God in *Revelation*, the "white raiments" of the elders in *Judges*. But "white," though most often signifying beauty, purity, and elegance, is also more rarely used—as a literally descriptive word—in connection with leprosy, and has been associated in the language with pestilence and death. More consistent is the juxtaposition of "light" and "dark," the dark being always bad and light always good, from the original creation of light to divide it from the primeval dark and to show the way for men to see truth and good works and glory and the light of God himself: "In thy light," sang the Psalmist, "shall we see light." There can be no question that when the Lord looked upon his work and found it good, it was the light that pleased him, not the dark. Where the references occur in the Bible to a literal blackness of skin, the association seems to retain its negative cast. "Look not upon me," adds the Shulamite maiden in the *Song of Songs*, "because I am black." A second such allusion is rather more equivocal. This is the reference in *Numbers* to the Lord's anger at Aaron and Miriam after they had spoken against Moses for marrying "an Ethiopian woman," the term "Ethiopian" signifying a person of black skin. The text suggests that the Lord was angry primarily because the offenders were jealous of Moses' special role as the Lord's man. If the issue here *was* colour, then his anger was ironically vented: his punishing finger touched Miriam and she became *"leprous, white as snow."* I suspect, however, that Aaron was objecting to the Ethiopian woman not because she was black—the Israelites who came out of Egypt could hardly have been a lily-white race—but because she was gentile. In this case God either knew more about Moses' origins than Aaron did or was simply being less orthodox than his high priest, a not unfamiliar state of affairs.

THE CARRY-OVER of the Bible's imagery into the common usage, visible in Chaucer and Milton, is richly illustrated in Shakespeare, whose own impact on the English language has hardly been less great than that of the Bible itself.

> *Black is the badge of hell,*
> *the hue of the dungeons and the suit of night.*

says the King in *Love's Labour's Lost*, in a passage of raillery in which the beauty of Rosaline (French and therefore presumably brunette) is called "black as ebony" and her admirer Biron chided for loving "an Ethiope." In quite another tone, in *Macbeth*, we come on: "The devil damn thee black——", again the symbolic joining of sin, the devil, and the blackness of skin which runs continuously from Job and the prophets through centuries of our literature. (Thus Fitzgerald in *Omar Khayyam*: "For all the sin wherewith the face of man is blackened. . . ."). In Shakespeare's first tragedy, *Titus Andronicus*, the villain is a black man. In *Othello* Shakespeare treats the theme with far greater subtlety. No doubt is left that Brabantio's rage is due in part to the thought that his daughter would run "to the sooty bosom of such a thing as thou," but the direct allusions to Othello's colour are few. Perhaps the most ironic are those Shakespeare puts in the mouth of Othello himself, as where in the rage of his rising jealousy he says:

> *Her name, that was as fresh*
> *As Dian's visage is now begrimed and black*
> *As mine own face.*

and where he cries out: "Arise, black vengeance!" He looks upon the sleeping Desdemona not wanting to shed her blood,

> *Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow*
> *And smooth as monumental alabaster.*

When he has done the deed, the servant Emilia shrieks at him: "You the blacker devil!"

One might travel many paths into some of the mysteries of this little-studied matter, whether

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in other cultures, including the African,[4] or in our own. These could run, in the latter case, from tracing the notions and characteristics attached to blondness or brunette-ness (over the whole course of the Anglo-Saxon romantic tradition on down to the Hollywood illustrations, from Mary Pickford—contradicted, to be sure, by Garbo and Dietrich—and Theda Bara, and the convention requiring cowboy-hero always to wear white hat and ride white horse and cowboy villain always a black hat and a black horse). One might pursue these themes into some of their deeper and more enigmatic courses, as Professor Harry Levin did in *The Power of Blackness*, in which he examines the imagery of black and blackness in Hawthorne, Poe, and Melville. But to lead us back to the aspects of the matter that touch us here most directly let me only follow an allusion from his pages to William Blake's poem, *The Little Black Boy*—part of a collection published in 1789—in which the outlook imposed by the white society on the black child is quite neatly capsuled:

My mother bore me in the southern wild,
And I am black, but O! my soul is white;
White as an angel is the English child,
But I am black, as if bereav'd of light.
My mother . . . began to say:
. . . And we are put on earth a little space
That we may learn to bear the beams of love;
And these black bodies and this sunburnt face
Is but a cloud, and like a shady grove.
For when our souls have learn'd the heat to bear,
The cloud will vanish; we shall hear His voice,
Saying: "Come out from the grove, My love and care,
And round my golden tent like lambs rejoice."
Thus did my mother say, and kissed me;
And thus I say to little English boy.
When I from black and he from white cloud free,
And round the tent of God like lambs we joy,
I'll shade him from the heat, till he can bear
To lean in joy upon our Father's knee;
And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair,
And be like him, and he will then love me.

This raising of "white" and debasement of "black" has been marked deep on the minds of all through time and every "white" person has more or less unconsciously imbibed it as a nourishment for his self-esteem. Like the English child in Blake's poem, he was already the colour of the angels, while the black man could only yearn after whiteness, whether of character, soul, or of skin, and hope that by becoming "like" the white man—whether on earth or in heaven—he would come at last to be loved. This arrangement of things was communicated to all in our culture by all its modes and means, passed by osmosis through all the membranes of class, caste, and colour of relationships, caressingly and painlessly injected into our children by their school texts and, even more, their storybooks.

CONSIDER ONLY ONE contemporary example, out of the Dr. Dolittle stories, written by an Englishman, which have delighted European and American children since 1920. Dr. Dolittle, an animal doctor who travels with an entourage of a dog, a duck, a pig, an owl, a monkey, and a parrot, goes to Africa to cure monkeys of a plague. Dolittle and his animal helpers become the prisoners of a black king. In the king's garden the parrot and the monkey meet the king's son, Prince Bumpo, who is pictured as an ugly-gnome-like black man with a huge nose that covers most of his face. They hear him yearn aloud: "If only I were a *white* prince!" The parrot promises that Dr. Dolittle will change his colour if he helps them escape. To Dr. Dolittle, the unhappy prince tells his story:

> "Years ago I went in search of The Sleeping Beauty, whom I had read of in a book. And having travelled through the world many days, I at last found her and kissed the lady very gently to wake her—as the book said I should. 'Tis true indeed that she woke. But when she saw my face she cried out, 'Oh, he's black!' And she ran away and wouldn't marry me—but went to sleep again somewhere else. So I came back, full of sadness, to my father's kingdom. Now I hear that you are a wonderful magician and have many powerful potions. So I come to you for help. If you will turn me white, so that I may go back to The Sleeping Beauty, I will give you half of my kingdom and anything besides you ask."

Bumpo refuses to settle just for blond hair and says: "I would like my eyes blue, too, but I suppose that would be very hard to do." The

[4] During an American tour in 1959, *Les Ballets Africaines*, a dance troupe from newly-independent and highly-nationalistic Guinea, performed a dance described as traditional and even ritualistic, depicting the universal theme of the duel between good and evil. Both dancers involved were black men, the good spirit appearing dressed in a shining white tunic and headdress with white plume, and the evil demon identically dressed, only in a dead black.

Varying concepts and practices relating to the colours black and white have been attributed to different African tribes. These conventions are familiar and highly visible in other cultures and long pre-date contact with Western men, *e.g.*, in the Chinese theatre the hero's conventional make-up is always white, the villain's always black, and the same goes for the depiction of good and bad in the art of Hindu-influenced southern Asia, and for the colouring of the *wajang*, the puppets used in the most popular of all the traditional arts of Java.

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doctor concocts a paste which whitens Bumpo's face and keeps it that way long enough for him and his friends to escape, having first refused to give Bumpo a mirror because he knew that the medicine would wear off and that Bumpo would be "as black as ever in the morning." As they escape, the doctor says, "Poor Bumpo." The parrot says: "Oh, of course he would know we were just joking with him." The duck says: "Serve him right if he does turn black again. I hope it is a dark black." Dr. Dolittle decides that instead of apologising he will send Bumpo some candy when he gets back home.

I do not know if Negro children have been readers of Hugh Lofting's Dolittle stories, but vast numbers of white children apparently have —it came up in the first place when a discussion of these matters in a seminar stirred the recollection of a graduate student of 30, and an indirect question brought immediate recall of the story to my own daughter, then 16. It is not hard to imagine the effect on white children who, as they chortle over the good doctor's adventures with the animals, also take in this vignette of the ugly black prince who wanted to be white in order to be loved. It takes no great art either to imagine how this tale might stab a black child or help give him all unknowingly the same love for whiteness that it nourishes in the white child.[5]

Colour Caste

THE IMPRINT on Negroes of this whole system of ordering "black" and "white" has been seen and experienced by many but studied by very few. Every "black" person obviously has been called upon to reject or somehow deflect from himself the associations of evil and inferiority so powerfully attached to blackness. He has been called upon to do this, moreover, under conditions in which his ego was kept under constant assault from all the conditions of his life. That so many Negroes in every successive generation found the ego strength to meet and resist these identifications is in itself no small miracle. That a greater number accepted the white man's images as the truth about themselves is no wonder at all.

Out of this acceptance came the notions and practices of colour caste among Negroes, the notions and virtue and non-virtue attached to lightness and darkness, the placing of the highest value on non-blackness. This was, as I have already remarked, the basis for the separate identity of the *gens de couleur*, the underlying reason for the adoption of the term *coloured*, and the starting point for the establishment of tight little groups of lighter-skinned Negro aristocrats. There is some suggestion that from the time of the forming of the "Brown Fellowship" in Charleston in 1790 until post-Civil War Reconstruction days the practice of colour caste remained locked in these small communities. This seems, at least, to be the meaning of the element of surprise in an exchange of letters between Martin R. Delany (who went to Charleston from New York in 1871) to Frederick Douglass. Delany wrote indignantly to Douglass of the attitudes and practices he found among the pre-Civil War free Negroes there, bringing from Douglass an astonished and angry response:

> "Can it be that the coloured people of South Carolina are going to make such fools of themselves.... Are we to have, nay have we got a caste called the *Browns* in South Carolina?... I certainly unite with you in your hottest denunciations of that contemptible and senseless imitation of one of the meanest feelings that ever crept into the human heart."

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[5] An example of another kind, and earlier in time, is "The Story of Two Little Lambs," in Maud Ballington Booth, *Sleepy-Time Stories* (New York, 1900).

A little white lamb strays from the flock and is lost and meets a little black lamb in the forest. Says the little black lamb: "You are what they call a White Lamb, and White Lambs have a good home and good things all the time, and they say that they have a good Shepherd; but I am only a black one... some day when we meet the good Shepherd (if we ever do chance to meet Him) He will take us too, and bring us to the White Lambs' fold."

To this the white lamb replies: "I don't think He would like you very much for I have always been told that He wants His Sheep and Lambs to have very white, white wool and you are black." The Shepherd Jesus comes to recover his stray white lamb and promises that he can wash him clean and white again, and is about to leave when the little black lamb speaks up and says he wishes he was one of Jesus' lambs too. "But it's no use," he says, "for they say you only want White Sheep and Lambs and cannot bear black wool, so I cannot be the sort of Lamb you want." To which Jesus replies: "Did you not hear that I can wash away the stains and make my little Lamb white again?" "But, good Shepherd," interposes the little white lamb, 'that Lamb has always been black.... It isn't your Lamb, it's quite another sort." Jesus is sad and angry. 'Who said the Black Lambs were not mine? Who said I do not want them?"

So he takes up both little lambs, carries them to a stream in which he washes them, "and when they came out they were both white, as white as snow. They bleated for joy and jumped around the Shepherd, and then they laid their little heads in His tender hand, and He stroked them lovingly."

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But colour caste spread and grew, moved out into all classes among Negroes and came to shape the attitudes and personalities of all who were touched by it.[6] "Among Negroes themselves," wrote James Weldon Johnson in his *Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man* (1912), "there is the peculiar inconsistency of a colour question. Its existence is rarely admitted and hardly ever mentioned; it may not be too strong a statement to say that the great portion of the race is unconscious of its influence; yet this influence, though silent, is constant."

The first forthright scrutiny it ever received from scholars was in a series of investigations made in the late 1930s by a group of Negro and white social scientists led by the late E. Franklin Frazier and Charles Johnson. They showed that at all levels in the Negro population in both North and South shades of relative darkness and lightness had become tightly related to social, moral, and æsthetic judgments and affected relationships of all kinds, from playmates among children to marriage mates among adults. Until these studies appeared, showing the "unimaginable bitterness and antipathies (that) rage within the veil of colour," very little had ever been said in print about this pervasive fact of Negro life.

Apparently its first appearance as the central theme of a novel was in Wallace Thurman's *The Blacker the Berry* (New York, 1929) which brought out into the open, according to Langston Hughes, "a subject little dwelt upon in Negro fiction." The title comes from a folk saying often defensively on the lips of the darker-skinned, especially the women: "The blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice." Thurman's heroine Emma Lou is a dark girl whom he takes through every kind of Negro milieu, mercilessly depicting the hurts and the cruelties inflicted upon her. These begin when she is still in her cradle with the scorn and derision of relatives ("Try some lye," they would joke viciously to her mother, "it may eat it [the blackness] out. She can't look any worse!"). It goes on with the hatred of her mother who sees her daughter's darkness as her penalty for marrying a dark man of whom she was ashamed. Emma Lou goes to school in Los Angeles where she hopes to find a kindlier cosmopolitanism, but she is snubbed by lighter Negroes there too. She goes to Harlem where she finds all the better jobs—even at the menial levels of restaurant work—restricted to lighter-skinned girls, and where she must even listen to the raucous taunts of hoodlums she passes on the streets, their voices carrying after her with: "Man, you know I don't haul no coal," or singing a common ditty:

A yellow girl rides in a limousine,
A brownskin rides a Ford,
A black girl rides an old jackass,
But she gets there, yes, my lord.

There are many variations on this theme, the following being one of the most common:

White, you're right,
Light, you can fight,
Brown, stand around,
Black, stand back!

Emma Lou makes a friend of a West Indian girl who is also suffering the slings and arrows of rejection as a "monkey chaser" but even here the circle is rounded for her by a West Indian landlady who turns her away because, Thurman explains, "persons of colour don't associate with blacks in the Caribbean Islands she had come from." He takes us with his heroine through the common practice of skin bleaching, the use of all sorts of preparations and powders on which great fortunes were made in the ready market among dark-skinned women. She even tries arsenic wafers, which she had heard increased skin pallor, but only gets sick, and all the ointments and solutions only serve to give

[6] The yearning-after-whiteness and colour caste values governed not only Negroes in the United States but throughout the Americas. James Ivy traces the matter not only through the terminologies used in Portuguese and Spanish but in the rich literature in both those languages.

The late Franz Fanon, a Negro of Martinique and a psycho-analyst, wrote in *Peau Blanc, Masques Noirs* (Paris, 1952) with great force and passion of the ways in which these same pressures shaped the black man who came under the domination of France.

In shapes that await someone's closer look, the matter also appears in African settings. E.g., in *Drawn in Colour: African Contrasts* (New York, 1962), Noni Jabavu, daughter of a distinguished South African educator, quotes a cousin of hers: " 'Funny thing about these up-north people. All the ones who came were so *black*. . . .' We were a little taken aback, then jumped to the defence of the East Africans. . . . 'Don't talk rubbish! Haven't we got our dark-complexioned ones?' The cousin clung to his point. . . . 'Why is it the ones who come south all happen to be this black-as-sin type?' We at once stopped laughing and winced at the idiom. We were shocked to have to admit that we had all observed it. . . . He was speaking of an ugly thing, being blunt and unashamed about the colour prejudice that we all knew and felt. . . . In months to come I was to be astounded to find this same preference for copper-coloured complexions lurking even among the Ugandans themselves whose own deep colouring is artistically complete and reminds you of the look of rich dark fruit when the bloom is on it. These secret dissatisfactions made me wonder if there weren't more intricacies than meet the eye in the complex attitudes about colour which arouse emotions the world over" (pp. 85–86).

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her rashes, burns, and irritations. In a school job, at church, she goes on seeking acceptance without finding it, and when a "yaller nigger" shows interest, she is flattered "that a man as light as he should find himself attracted to her," but then she finds she despises him for this very reason. She is drawn back to the man who had most brutally misused her, but even he, at the bottom of the pit of misfortune from which she tries vainly to lift him, feels free to step on her at will, and this finally forces her to look squarely at herself and her life. Thurman, a gifted writer who died very young, brings his dark heroine at the end to a positive affirmation of strength: "What she needed to do now was to accept her black skin as being real and unchangeable, to realise that certain things were, had been, and would be, and with this in mind to begin life anew, always fighting, not so much for acceptance by other people, but for acceptance of herself and by herself." She can do this, but only at the price of achieving a terrible hardness of spirit.

Not many other writers even yet have chosen to deal explicitly and at length with these themes of lightness and darkness in Negro life. It is deeply enfolded—indeed, often hidden—in the writing of Langston Hughes. Saunders Redding comes back to it again and again in his work, but almost always glancingly or in brief episodes through which he still manages to show how enormously important it is to him. In the first chapter of his *No Day of Triumph*, for example, he writes of his two grandmothers between whom there lay a deep abyss—"one was yellow, the other was black." He tells how as a small boy who already knew there was "a stigma attached to blackness" he realised that for his Grandma Conway blackness was not merely a *blemish* but a *taint*. Another is his poignant account of a girl, a distant relative, who never overcame the handicap of her darker colour, and ended up by dissolving as a human being. In *The Third Generation* (1954) Chester Himes writes about a woman who is the product three generations removed of a union between a plantation lord and a slave. She is white in appearance and is wedded to this whiteness with an intensity that is a sickness. This is the way in which the sins of her forebears are visited upon her, for her obsession drags her, her husband, and her children, into various kinds of self-destruction.

In *Proud Shoes* (1956) Pauli Murray gives us a portrait of her grandmother who was actually just such a woman, herself the daughter of a plantation owner and a slave who was mostly Cherokee Indian. She built her entire identity around these facts of her origin and her first loyalty was not only to her "whiteness" but to her "Southern aristocratic whiteness." Thus when a neighbour thinks to insult her by calling her "a half-white bastard," she retorts:

> "Hmph! You think I'm insulted? I'll tell anybody I'm a white man's child. A fine white man at that. A Southern aristocrat. If you want to know what I am, I'm an octoroon, that's what I am—seven-eighths white. The other eighth is Cherokee Indian. I don't have one drop of coloured blood in me and I don't have to mix in with good-for-nothing niggers if I don't want to."

"Anyone who has been part of a family of mixed bloods in the United States or the West Indies," writes Miss Murray, "has lived intimately with the unremitting search for whiteness. To deny that it is part of one's heritage would be like saying one had no parents." The form it took was the unending obsession with colour:

> "The world revolved on colour and variations in colour. It pervaded the air I breathed. I learned it in hundreds of ways. I picked it up from grown folks around me. I heard it in the house, on the playground, in the streets everywhere. The tide of colour beat upon me ceaselessly, relentlessly.
>
> "Always the same tune, played like a broken record, robbing one of personal identity.... It was colour, colour, colour all the time, colour, features, and hair.... Two shades lighter! Two shades darker! Dead white! Coal black! High yaller! Mariny! Good hair! Bad hair! Stringy hair! Nappy hair! Thin lips! Thick lips! Red lips! Liver lips! Blue veined! Blue gummed! Straight nosed! Flat nosed!
>
> "Brush your hair, child, don't let it get kinky. Cold-cream your face, child, don't let it get sunburned! Don't suck your lips, child, you'll make them too niggerish! Black is evil, don't mix with mean niggers! Black is honest, you half-white bastard. I always said a little black and a little white sure to make a pretty sight! He's black as sin and evil in the bargain. The blacker the berry the sweeter the juice!"

THE UNREMITTING SEARCH for "whiteness" naturally produced its counterpart in a defence by aggressive reassertion of blackness. Among the masses of black or darker people, who in the past were predominantly of the lower economic groups, elementary self-defence took the form of a strong counter-prejudice against the lighter-skinned. The popular idiom was (and still is) full of lively expression of feelings about the "yellow niggers," many of them counter-thrusting hard and deep at the assumed illegitimacy of the "yellow bastards" whether in the present or past generations. Thus "yellow" became, like "black," a fighting word in many situations and touching areas of great sensitivity and ambiguity even when used more or less lightly in the common parlance.

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For a long time the defence of blackness was identified with race chauvinism and held out at the edges of Negro life. It was wrapped up with black nationalism and this was the stuff of extremism, as in the case of Marcus Garvey whose appeal in the 1920s was made to the dark and the poor against the better-off and lighter-skinned. It was, in fact, Garvey's brutal exposure of this deep cleavage which made many thoughtful Negroes realise how costly colour caste had become. The beginning of the end of its most egregious forms dates from that time. Negro writers, poets, and scholars had again and again over many years tried to resist the erosions of colour caste by insisting, among other things, on the virtues of blackness. W. E. B. Du Bois, himself one of the lighter Negro leaders and one of Garvey's prime foes and targets, had ceaselessly carried on a campaign on this score in all his writings. He refers caressingly always to "warm ebony" and "satin black" and "golden brown."

Colour Caste Fading

BUT EVEN a generation ago and longer, the sharp edge of changing circumstance was already undercutting colour caste among Negroes. There was, as I have suggested, the sobering experience of Marcus Garvey's violent colour chauvinism. There were also changes beginning in the Negro community which, while they came out of the common yearning to be "white"—*i.e.*, better off—in culture and mode of life, did begin to counteract the practice of assigning automatic value to degrees of actual physical whiteness. The push of rejection which had shunted so many into numbness and apathy prodded others into a fierce drive for achievement. Darker-skinned men came up from the lower economic rungs and won new status for themselves through education and financial success. This was not just a matter of a few exceptional achievers but of a sizeable class of men of the generation that grew up after the first World War followed by a still larger group of those who came up out of the depression and into the war years as they matured. As Franklin Frazier pointed out, this new class of men largely shouldered aside the older mulatto middle class. Instead of family and colour, they established position and money as the chief criteria of status in the Negro community. At the same time, however, in pursuit of the prevailing colour caste values by which they were still governed, such men almost invariably married lighter-skinned women. The showing of these men and the frequency of these marriages eventually had a certain taming effect on the overall expression of colour caste prejudice and, more important, also began to shade down a substantial segment of the population into increasingly common shades of brown. It was already becoming bad form in many quarters even 30 years ago to express colour caste prejudices openly even though they were still widely held and practised. Writing of the Negro upper crust in the 1950s, Professor Frazier said it still had an "unavowed coloured snobbishness which has ceased to have much importance."[7]

In this, as in all else affecting Negro life, the pace of change quickened as we moved into the 1960s. Many of the old patterns of behaviour still exist and still govern many people, but they are all but lost in the great swirl of new relationships and new attitudes. The effect is that of a kaleidoscope in which all the old images and postures are mingled with new pictures and new attitudes, and the view you get depends on where and when you look and with whom you talk at any given moment. This jumbled scene, like a vast mural with a host of sharp details, emerges so clearly and so vividly from my interviews and conversations that I turn to them now for vignettes of this process in motion. First, then, for varying views of the amount and pace of change and of the shape of the transition:

> "Negroes are less sensitive about colour now, less self-conscious about it when they are among whites. You rarely find a Negro who does not now more easily discuss the matter. Prejudice is vanishing. You will still find it in the old strongholds of the past, in Charleston and New Orleans, a lot less still in Washington. I think this change has simply come out of the crucible of the struggle for equality in which people have learned certain elementary lessons. This is the main explanation. . . ."

> "This is gradually melting away. You just don't hear anything any more about black, yellow, mulattos, half-whites, octoroons, the kind of terms that were fashionable 40 or 50 years ago. . . ."

> "I hear far less about the blue-veined society among Negroes now than I used to. I don't hear references to colour, except in jest. In the past to call a man a 'black S.O.B.,' was the worst possible epithet, and not because of the S.O.B. part alone, but 'black' itself was derogatory. I think there may be a difference now, an absence of emphasis of skin colour rather than any new positive affirmation of the virtues of blackness. . . ."

> "There is a lessening of colour prejudice within the group. They are not as bad as they were. It's a touchy point. Negroes have not been frank on this. 'Mixed blood,' or 'mulatto,' one still doesn't know what word to use. In my upbringing, the matter of colour was not to be mentioned. We could never say a man was 'black' and never use

[7] E. F. Frazier, *The Black Bourgeoisie* (1957).

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the adjective 'yellow' because of its connotation. 'Black' was a frightening word and anyone of mixed origin would flinch at the word 'yellow.' Langston Hughes thought his family here, the Langstons, rejected his mother because of her colour and he was always sharp on Washington's middle class because of its colour snobbishness. This is changed now generally. It is still true that men select the lighter wife, the darker woman has a hard time, but not as hard as it used to be. . . ."

"This has changed enormously. Except that I have to say that only yesterday I visited a church in Macon, Georgia, and here were some 50 kids, all little light-coloured mulatto kids. At least fifteen of them looked white, all the others were shaded up a sort of brown, but with straight hair. Only a few darker people were there. The first Congregational Church here in Atlanta used to be like that. The younger generation here is much darker. For the most part it is dark brown and black now. There are no gradations of this left in Atlanta society; a man is all right whatever his colour if he has good prospects, and I think there is no disadvantage for the dark girl if she has good family. I don't get around in society much, but look at the campus queens and the drum majorettes! They have changed enormously. There are more mixed marriages. This sort of thing has been going out. . . ."

"I don't really know if colour ideas are changing. I hear it spoken of less frequently than even ten years ago, unless I am selectively not hearing it any more. It is not uncommon now to get cases (in a clinic) based on colour rejection. Any Negro family that is honest will admit that colour is important in the self-image of themselves and their children. This is still prevalent although there is some evidence of change. When I was in college it was an inviolable rule that a successful man had to marry a fair woman. I don't think this trend is as marked now as it was then, 20 years ago. . . ."

"The change has been from shame to pride. For a long time in my life I would never admit I had a wish I wasn't coloured. It was my private wish. I would feel guilty about it. As late as my college days, I would think: 'O boy, if I weren't coloured. . . .' I used to think that blackness, usually identified with Africa, was ugly and that Caucasian features were beautiful. I don't think that any more. I find myself wishing sometimes that I was darker. I feel myself looking at some darker people now and having a feeling of admiration, even envy, where not so long ago I would have thought they were ugly. Now in marriage the question of colour would not be a problem the way it was in my younger days. . . ."

STANDARDS OF BEAUTY lie close to the core of the whole business of colour caste. Negroes generally adopted the models of "white" or "Caucasian" good looks that filled the moving picture screens, bill-boards, newspapers, and magazines, and the greatest favour and preferment went to those Negro men and women who most closely approximated to these standards. Aggressive dark men could lift themselves above colour caste discrimination by their success, but a prime reward of their success was the chance it gave them to reject dark-skinned women and to take lighter-skinned and less Negro-looking women to be their wives. This left the dark Negro woman the least desired and the least admired. She became the carrier of the heaviest part of the burden of the colour caste system and that is why her status now is the real key to the extent of its passing. The evidence seems to be that her position has changed much, but still less and much more slowly than that of all the other actors in this drama.

In the 1930s, the very black and very Negro Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune presented a new model not of beauty but of high achievement that made a considerable dent in colour caste attitudes. Mrs. Bethune, daughter of ex-slaves, noted educator, frequent visitor to the Roosevelt White House, was the founder and president of the National Council of Negro Women, holder of important government posts, and a spokesman to whom everyone listened. I was told the following of her:

> Mary McLeod Bethune became the greatest Negro woman in the country and was worshipped by all and came to represent the hopes of the race. Nobody could think ill of black women after her.

Mrs. Bethune did not, of course, quite manage to cast her brighter light over *all* black women, but she did play an important role in beginning to change the perceptions of others, as in this self-examination:

> When you are ashamed of something you turn away and don't look at it or you never look deeply. When you are no longer ashamed, you look and you begin to appreciate it. When I first saw Mrs. Bethune, I thought, my God what an ugly woman! But later I could only think of what a grand lady she was. Then sometime about 1952 or so, the first time I was shockingly aware that I was thinking that a black girl I saw with kinky hair was beautiful, a girl I saw at the University of California with her hair pulled back. I saw that she was beautiful, a black girl with Negro features. In my family there was every colour, from white as snow to black as coal. When I was a young fellow, I remember four or five Negro dance teachers, always pretty in the American Caucasian sense, like Lena Horne. Now I see an almost deliberate kind of native naturalness. I think of Pearl Primus, the dancer. The dark woman's disadvantage is rapidly disappearing. The number of men who would marry women darker than themselves is far greater than in my generation.

There is probably no such thing at this moment as an inclusively accurate description of this

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changing pattern of experience. Each individual has his own version, his own accent, agreeing with all others only that things are not as they were. Some examples:

"In 1955, I heard an ad over the radio for a cosmetic: 'Are you too dark to be loved?' I got sore and called the station and the girl there told me the same ad was running in my own paper, the *Afro-American*. And it was. I told the publisher I thought this sort of thing was perpetuating among Negroes the idea that a light Negro was better than a dark one. He agreed and said the language of the ad had to be changed. Here in Harlem now a dark girl would have very little to remind her of it. It is too polyglot. Now black girls figure in our cheesecake pictures as well as white or light girls. Formerly if I sent a photographer out and said get us some cheesecake, he would just automatically get as close an approximation to the Nordic as you could get. But I called our photographer in and said let's not have any of this leapfrogging over the dark person. Now you take the Press Photographer's ball, the Elks Beauty contest, you know where the judge holds his hand over the girl's head and goes by the applause, and I've seen crowds give the applause to the dark girl even though the fair girl was better looking...."[8]

"In the old days the Negro beauty queen was indistinguishable from white. She was practically white. In the last 15 or 20 years the colour ideal has been browning down and from 'good hair,' that is straight hair, we have now come to where Negro type of hair can be fitted into popular coiffures. The beauty queen at Howard could not be darker than brown, in some Southern schools she could be darker brown, but some other schools are worse on this than Howard...."

"Negroes laugh about whites and sun-tan and getting their hair curled. There *is* a new appreciation of blackness, a black girl is more acceptable now than before, but she still needs white features, still has to be chiefly in the *Saturday Evening Post* style, that is closer to the white standard of beauty. But there is a certain relaxation on the item of colour. A brown man will marry a black woman now where he wouldn't have 15 or 20 years ago...."

"When I was growing up the fair-skinned girl was the more desired. Now this is not true. Brown is the colour now—'I found a fine brown,' a man will say. People can now find a black girl beautiful, whereas 40 years ago nobody would have. At the Comus Club dance in Brooklyn I've seen the colour darkening for a long time. Thirty years ago little dark girls wouldn't come because they didn't have a good time. Now they show their dark shoulders and they're enchanting. Hair straightening is still in among women but going among men. When I was in college men used to use some gooey stuff to straighten their hair, called 'Congolene.' Getting your hair 'conked,' barbers would rub it in. You see very little of this now...."

"The great hair question is on its way out. Some girls I know, not many, and some men, just don't bother any more about hair. They don't spend hours and weeks on it. It's getting to be the mark of a square to pay attention to hair from this point of view. This is developing this way, I notice, in musical circles and backstage in the show and art world, mostly among young people. In Harlem there's a sharp line between those who do and those who don't fiddle with their hair. For men this is 'conking,' for women 'processing.' If you conk or process your hair, you've got to keep it dry, keep out of the rain, etc. Many people just can't be bothered any more. The changes in this are mostly hidden, but they are perceptible. Ideas of beauty are changing more slowly. Look at Poitier, very black, very Negro, very beautiful. But Harry Belafonte is still the hero, girls are not putting Poitier up on their walls. The girls' ideal of beauty is still Lena Horne and Dorothy Dandridge, though we do have Pearl Bailey to give hope to little black girls who would try to bleach their skin. There is much less bleaching now...."

To BE SURE, there is an intimate entwining of all these shapes of the Negro group identity with the issue of relationship to Africa, both in the past when it was so deeply submerged and now when it has so dramatically emerged. Here is how these interactions were seen in relation to colour caste, beginning with the account of a young woman who was at the time we talked just 21 and still an undergraduate at Howard University in Washington:

When I was a child in elementary school I was called "a black African" because of my colour, more or less an insult.... When I came here (to Howard) I was very colour conscious. All the queens of the courts when I first came here were light-skinned. Now we're getting away from it. Several girls my colour have been elected queens of a court. At times I feel pretty bad. Recently had several isolated instances where darker girls were treated by lighter girls as though they were less of a human being, though it is never put on that basis openly. This came up in the Greek letter sororities. A dark girl has to have something special in her favour to get in, whereas a light-skinned girl just has to be light-skinned. I think

[8] The switch in behaviour sometimes produces ironic results. In New York where hitherto lily-white enterprises have begun to open places for Negroes, they are often likely to want their new virtue to be as visible as possible. The patterns of change are infinite in their variety, but some kind of turning point was reached in this matter when a Negro model who had failed to get on a certain TV show complained to the New York State Commission on Human Rights "that she had been turned down on the basis that she 'was not coloured enough.'" (*New York Amsterdam News*, April 28th, 1962.)

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we're moving away from this a good deal now. It is openly discussed, there is a greater realisation of it. It is quite possible that there is a connection between this and Africa. American students used to joke about the way the Africans looked, their hair, very dark, very Negro. Now dark-skinned Negroes are just beginning to find a place in this community and so are the Africans, who are more respected now because of independence but are not really integrated as they should be. People are getting more educated, possibly realising their common ancestral background. Some American students are getting more nationalistic about Africa and the relation between African and American students is criticised a good deal in the university paper. . . ."

And some others:

"I don't think Africa has anything to do with the changes that have been coming for more than a decade and even since before World War II. But I do think the emergence of Africa will accelerate the vanishing of these distinctions among Negroes. Nkrumah stands for something new in this respect too. Seeing black men in the regal majesty of dignity and power will probably wipe out whatever is left of prejudice against blackness. . . ."

"I think Africans are making black more acceptable. Africans with status are bound to make this difference. As African-American relations emerge, attitudes about colour in America will change, both for whites and Negroes. . . ."

"Africa is now emerging affirmatively and blackness is benefiting from it. . . ."

"Colour is not such a big thing for Negroes any more. As for women, the most beautiful girl I have ever seen in my whole life was a jet black girl with narrow features, slanting eyes, thick dark hair, exquisite figure, a Ga woman I saw in Accra, a school teacher. . . ."

"The African type is now no longer grotesque or so different. Nkrumah is seen as a handsome man, dignified, with a strong face. Only 20 years ago he wouldn't have been seen this way. The African girl here makes no effort to straighten her hair, while American girls' ideal is still the white model and they are getting closer to it with their waves and curls. Men on the other hand don't touch their hair so much now, they keep it close cropped. Only Africans let it grow long, partly out of the new pride they have in themselves."[9]

"I heard a blonde Negro woman at a Nkrumah reception say: 'I'm so proud of being black!'. . ."

[9] In her *Amsterdam News* column (May 5th, 1962) Poppy Cannon White wrote under the title "Hair and History": "Manufacturers and marketers of hair straightening preparations and even some of the beauty parlours are said to be worried about the African trends. Just the other evening on a television recital, Metropolitan Opera tenor George Shirley appeared . . . wearing white tie and tails, with his hair quite long and natural, in a manner which has already become identified with a number of leading diplomats from Africa. . . . Even more startling is a similar trend among the ladies, South African Miriam Makeba is said to have started the fashion. . . . Already there are rumours that certain style-setters are dreaming up new types of permanent waves calculated to transform straight or semi-straight hair into tight, springy twists. . . ."

But the new style obviously still had a long way to go to the more common acceptance. On the following pages of the same issue of the *Amsterdam News* were ads for "hair-weaving" ("Human hair, Colour blended to Match Perfectly, Woven to your own Hair, Cannot Come Off, Defies Detection," or again: "Change your Hair-Do as easily as you change your dress . . . chignons, braids, fine curls, clusters. . . ." The new fashion in wigs in the society at large was going big in the Negro market as well. In *Ebony* the same week, May, 1962, there were twenty ads for hair preparations ("Repeated Using Results in Improved Soft-Silkened Hair") and eight for skin preparations ("Makes your skin lighter, brighter," "Lighter, lovelier skin beauty for You!")

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Colin MacInnes

Dark Angel

The Writings of James Baldwin

I ENVY WHOEVER writes of James Baldwin a century from now. That his work will then be discussed I have no doubt, since of all writers in English of our era his style is most classic, his theme one of the most relevant. But it is because of this theme, precisely, that it is so hard to criticise his writing now.

Baldwin's essential theme is life-death-passion-honour-beauty-horror . . . the perpetual theme since the Greeks and long before, the only one worthy of a great artist and of which, as writer and man, he has proved himself so worthy. But the particular raw material from which Baldwin derives his underlying attitudes is the "racial question"; and to hear those words is to make any white heart sink. For we all agree about the "racial question," do we not? Most of us by ignoring it, so that it is not a "question" at all, and those of us whom it harasses, by the expedient of adopting "liberal" attitudes towards it. Of course all men are equal, or ought to be! Of course we are for the freedom of our black brothers! But in this liberal posture there are fatal flaws. The first is that, in respect to the "colour question," no white can ever possibly know what he is being "liberal" about. It can never enough be emphasised: no white, not even of an oppressed minority, nor however strong his sense of justice and imagination, can ever know, *in his skin*, what it is to be a coloured man in a white racist society. I had a glimpse of this once when, in the late 'forties, I was attacked, alone, by an Arab throng in the old city of Cairo. I shall never forget those blindly piercing eyes: staring in mindless hatred not at me but at a *thing* totally detestable. Such looks are everyday experiences to Negroes in the African and American Souths, and we who are white simply cannot know them.

The other flaw becomes apparent when one imagines what the liberal vision of the Negro in the white world really consists of. On objective examination, it turns out to be what one might call the Eleanor Roosevelt vision. Things have not changed much save in one essential respect: the Negro is loved, nay respected, not rejected any longer. But has he *power*? Is he employing whites, telling them what to do, ordering their destinies—even choosing to reject them altogether? No, most certainly he is not! He must still be an inferior, albeit one cherished and accepted. ("The African is my brother, but I am his elder brother," as Albert Schweitzer has said).

What can this vision mean to any Negro—or to any who is not a cordial imbecile? I imagine, absolutely nothing. Negroes do not want equality on white men's terms: they want the only equality worth having, and which is real, namely one which can be *demanded* from a position of authentic strength. To any thinking, feeling Negro, a white man will thus be a racist who is a declared enemy, or a liberal who is a false friend. And that is why no white man, however brave and well-intentioned, can ever sing the Negro song. Even if what he says is true in every aspect, and even if he accepts in his heart without reserve not "liberal" equality—the kindly dole—but the equality born of power and possible danger to himself, his voice will be the wrong voice. No man can ever really speak for women; no Gentile for a Jew; no white man ever for a man of colour.

So THE SINGER OF THE BLUES must be a black man, but the paradox is that his audience must still be white. This is partly because there is no point in telling Negroes of the racial situation: it would be like lecturing convicts on conditions inside a jail; though certainly a coloured writer can *define* their situation to his people, and thus help them to confront their past the better to win their future. The next reason is that the Negro readership of "serious" writing is still insufficient to sustain a major writer: the audience is there all right, but because of

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enforced illiteracy the form of communication will be the wrong one. But the final reason why James Baldwin speaks to us of another race is that he still believes us worthy of a warning: he has not yet despaired of making us *feel* the dilemma we all chat about so glibly, of forcing us to see it is our problem, not the Negroes', and of trying to save us from the agonies that we too will suffer if the Negro people are driven beyond the ultimate point of desperation.

How long he will or can maintain this posture of entreaty one cannot tell. For no Negro writer is less interested than he in the condescending praises that the white literate shower on what they suppose to be a cultural curiosity; and like all Negro artists, he must be painfully aware of his people's call, in time of acutest crisis, to a total loyalty, an absolute closing of the ranks. And in his latest book, as we shall see, he is standing as if on a lonely precipice, still crying to white hearts and brains, but making what seems to be a last desperate appeal—anguished if not yet utterly bereft of hope.

BALDWIN HAS SEEMED both novelist and essayist (also one of the extraordinarily rare TV performers who are entirely convincing), but in reality he is neither: he is a premonitory prophet, a fallible sage, a soothsayer, a bardic voice falling on deaf and delighted ears. These qualities emerge best in his "essays" (for such one must call them, though they are so agonised and hortatory that the word hardly fits), and far less decisively in his novels. If I say I do not think his novels convey his intentions so effectively—if I say in fact that he is "not a novelist"—no doubt this will vex him but, if so, I think mistakenly. To begin with, to be a novelist seems to me something that, with the rarest exceptions, is so lacking in glamour or compulsion. The novel, to-day, is a hold-all you can throw any old literary garments into, and I am sure few who use this form—if it is still a form—are much dedicated to it: the motives for its use, even by deft practitioners, are in part commercial, since novels can make money, and in part because the public likes its intellectual meals served up in that kind of dish. Then, to achieve a world-wide reputation by the force of three collections of magazine articles, as Baldwin has so far done, seems to me a more astonishing achievement than to be a novelist of note. But most of all it is because I see—or hear—James Baldwin as a voice, a presence, a singer almost, that I feel the mode of direct address—to us in his own person, and not through invented "characters"—expresses his talent and his message best.

Yet before I try to describe these essays (a superfluous task, really, since their subject and form are pared down to an almost painful lucidity), I shall remind the reader of the novels, and say what I feel to be their limitations and their strengths.

Go Tell It On the Mountain (1953)

THIS IS A DENSELY-PACKED, ominous, sensual, doom-ridden story, lit by rare beauty, love and human penetration. The theme is life and religion and how both, wonderful and terrible, can create and destroy. The scene is the Temple of the Fire Baptised in Harlem during two days and a long night; from which place the writer leads us back and forth in time among the lives of worshippers in the congregation.

The prime figures are Gabriel the deacon, proud, passionate, violent and unforgiving as Satan, yet taking none of Satan's sweets (unless perhaps the love of power), and still wrestling inexorably with his God; and his adoptive son John, aged 14 (who believes Gabriel to be his father), torn between hatred of his parent and the wish to love him, and between the force of his own animal and mental life, and the hope of submission to salvation.

Gabriel, who is from the South, is twice married: first to Deborah, a sad sterile saint who was once raped by whites, and then to Elizabeth, whose bitter and beautiful lover Richard has killed himself leaving her the infant John. Gabriel has thus taken two "fallen" women—and is, we learn, responsible himself for yet another "fall"—that of Esther, a southern beauty who gives him a son, Royal, whom he rejects with shame and yearning.

By Elizabeth, his second wife, Gabriel has three children, the firstborn being the defiant and irreligious Roy whom he beats and secretly adores. Gabriel's sister Florence who is, so to speak, the deacon's human—if not religious—conscience, has also lost her charming wastrel husband Frank. The chief remaining character is Brother Elisha, a sweet-natured, fervent young pastor of the church who stands in relation to young John as a true brother.

All this may seem something of a mouthful—as indeed it sometimes does even in the novel, where the author makes severe demands on our attention. We may also notice that, among these blasted and determined lives, there are three disastrous marriages, two tragic love affairs, three rapes or seductions, and that four of the most adjusted and potentially happy characters meet violent ends; also that the sole other un-self-torturing personage in the book, the young pastor Elisha, is the only one who is not, as all the others are, related.

This bald synopsis may conjure up the notion of a melodrama, but the book is not like that at all. In the first place Baldwin never makes his characters suffer—or even die—unless they, so to say, "have to": unless, that is, the tragedy both arises from their inner natures and explains

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them. (A sure sign, incidentally, of an able writer is that he will never do violence to his creations unless this is, artistically, quite inevitable; whereas inferior writers strike their characters arbitrarily down for superficial effect —thereby throwing the whole story out of human balance.) The next reality about this misery and drama is that these are, by implication, a consequence of the Negro situation in the United States. For though this novel is less overtly a declaration of the doom that haunts Negro lives than other books of Baldwin's are, the social pressures impelling to destruction are suspended over almost every page. The third redeeming feature lies in the interplay of the obsessive religious instincts of the characters—or the lack of these—with their spiritual and even physical lives. Religion, whatever its quality, is not for them a mere matter of "worship" detached from normal daily existence: it is a fierce and constant compulsion that never abandons them a second.

To give a clue to the nature and omnipresence of this religious feeling, one might mention books entirely different from it—*Pilgrim's Progress,* say, or *The Scarlet Letter.* The point is that this is not a religious book in the sense of religion being an accessory theme grafted on to the plot—as so often turns out to be the case with the Roman Catholic novelists—but a story saturated with religious feeling, and which simply would not exist at all without it. As for the quality of this religious instinct that inexorably impels the characters, one might describe it as that of early pre-hierarchical Christianity, but transformed in three ways by its Negro nature. In the first place, it is *sensual* as white Christian religion so rarely has been, even to the extent of physical paroxysms in the church amounting to a kind of holy orgasm—not so much hysterical, as in equivalent white ecstasies, as in the sense of the flesh made spirit. Bodily sin may be rejected, but by no means the body (the fervent Elisha, we notice, is an accomplished and graceful athlete). Next, their faith is the characters' chief form of *social* life, as well as religious: most of them only begin to operate, or to do so intensely, as social beings, in the religious context of their lives. And last, their religion is unquestionably—though the author does not stress this fact unduly—one of moral protest. We know at once who the Egyptians are, and who the Israelites that their God will lead out of bondage.

As for the effects of their religion on their lives, these are, in human terms, usually repellent. One may admire the pride and utter devotion to their faith of the devouter characters; but scarcely the cruelties to themselves and others to which their beliefs command them. To meet, the "sinners" (as Esther, Royal, Frank or Richard) would certainly be more endearing; and even Gabriel's sister Florence, who comes to God in the end by fear of death, not by devotion, or his second wife Elizabeth, who refuses to deny the earlier joy of her 'sinful' fondness for her dead lover Richard, are infinitely more humane—and, one may say, Christian—than the relentless deacon or his coldly saintly first wife Deborah. Yet I should make it clear Baldwin is far too subtle an artist to reverse the conventional roles and make the good bad, and the bad good. For there is a lack of profundity in some of the "good" sinners, and the author can equally suggest that the holy Elisha is, in human terms, most lovable.

What Baldwin's own views on all this are—I mean his views as James Baldwin, and not as the creator of these persons—it is difficult to tell, and indeed it is scarcely our business to try to guess. All one can say with certainty is that he has been marked forever by his own early religious experience, and that he understands this theme as do few writers of our day. Also that his understanding is informed throughout with hope and pity; two qualities, I would like to add, that few writers are entitled to make manifest, since one must earn one's right to bestow them on mankind. (We are surely all tired by now of reviewers who tell us the most commonplace authors are "compassionate": you must be a fine kind of man or woman to be worthy to show compassion.)

We see this best in his portraits of the two chief characters of the book—in the Lear-like Gabriel, and in young John, reaching eagerly his whole being out to life from what imprisons it. Gabriel, like Lear, is in most senses a monster; and, tougher in spirit than the mad king, he does not even crack when his will comes close to madness. He has sinned with Esther, yes, but no man—still less any woman—may tell him so: God has forgiven him, for God is Gabriel's god, and to mankind he is unrepentant. Even when young John bends, at the book's end, to his overpowering will (or seems to), Gabriel cannot love John: his inexorable suspicion in fact redoubles. To those who have served him, or his body—Deborah, Esther and Elizabeth—he remains a demanding tyrant. Because he is God's elect, his hatred for any of God's creatures who do not bow before him is vengefully malevolent.

And yet... how is it that it is impossible to loathe—even to despise—Gabriel? Firstly, because he suffers and—worst of all suffering—endures its agonies without enlightenment. And then, though pride in a general way may

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be detestable (and spiritual pride, as Gabriel never knows, the ultimate of sins), one cannot but respect—if not admire—his pride: it is so total and so terrible in its effects on him. Most touching of all, this puritan who denies the flesh is hopelessly attached to it: his agony at the death of his bastard son Royal, and his love for the son Roy who denies him, give to this grim prophet feet of common clay.

But Gabriel's love for his own flesh makes him hate the son John who is not of his flesh. It is not that John is illegitimate, for so was his own loved son Royal—but that he, Gabriel, did not create him. And John, whose infant will is no less violent than his adoptive father's—and whose intelligent introspection is incomparably greater—knows this, curses Gabriel in his heart, and even hopes, when his half-brother Roy is stabbed,[1] "that Roy, to bring his father down, would die."

But John is also possessed, partly by example and partly by inner light, of religious yearnings. I am not quite sure how authentic James Baldwin intends us to believe John's religious instinct may be—for John's is not, for instance, a "natural" religious temperament like Elisha's or even, in terms of charity, his mother Elizabeth's. And since John is but fourteen, and undergoes, in the final pages of the book, an ecstatically terrifying conversion, my feeling is the writer intends this to be a reality for an adolescent boy but not, perhaps, an ultimate, enduring reality. Indeed, the final cryptic sentences of the book suggest this, when John says to his mother: "I'm ready: I'm coming: I'm on my way". This "way," one can feel, will never cease to be in some sense religious, but surely not as the Temple of the Fire Baptised—let alone the deacon—would understand this term.

The description, in the last chapter, of young John wrestling with religion, beholding eternity and death, plummeting into darkness, soaring to the dazzling light, is one of the most convincing accounts of a conversion I have read. It is unbearably harrowing, profundly imaginative, and psychologically exact. The reader's sensation of being physically present in the Temple—and of entering John's soul stretched out on the spiritual rack—is so compelling as to make one wish to flee this holy place. And curiously, one has a strong sensation of *noise*—of hectic music, rushing winds, agonised hosannahs, tortured hallelujahs: so much so that, at this moment of the book, Baldwin seems suddenly to become a blues or gospel singer.

[1] Roy is stabbed, in a gang fight, by whites. This is an echo of the insult that was done to Gabriel's first wife Deborah, and of the white police violence that led to the suicide of Elizabeth's first lover, Richard. But notice that the author makes clear, through the mouth of Roy's mother Elizabeth, that Roy's black gang has provoked the whites as much as they were provoked; also that the murder of Gabriel's cherished illegitimate son Royal resulted from a quarrel between blacks.

I mention these complications to show that Baldwin never denies the possibility of black villainy, as much as white; though what he does show—and one cannot but think rightly—is that the black-white situation in the States *must* lead to murder.

AMONG WHAT ARE KNOWN as "technical" felicities of the novel, I would mention first the language. Of possible influences on his style Baldwin himself has written, "I hazard the King James Bible, the rhetoric of the store-front church, something ironic and violent and perpetually understated in Negro speech..." and all this is accurate; though I would especially insist on the last item as opposed to the first, since any Semitic floridity that may linger in the Authorised Version is attenuated by that chiselled, *lethal* quality of prose which, as we shall see later on, is one of the glories of Baldwin's essays: words of a measured passion, like a healing knife. Though most of the book is in "author's narrative," rather than in dialogue, I would add that speech, when it does come, is marvellously economical, accurate and revealing. The scene, for instance, in which Gabriel tries to extricate himself from responsibility for his own and Esther's child makes me suppose that Baldwin will one day be a playwright—if he is not, as I suspect, already one.

As for the "flashback" device—so immediately effective and comprehensible in the cinema, but often troublesome in print—this does sometimes leave the reader rather up in the air but, in compensation, it permits of horribly effective ironies when the past abruptly clicks back to the present whose actions it has determined. In final praise, I would mention Baldwin's consummate gift for evoking what I believe to be the most elusive of emotions to any writer—that of pure animal love; and not of mere "sex," but a tender, erotic passion. And deeply as the dramatic and religious elements of the book impress me, I find even more wonderful his gift for persuading me beyond possibility of doubt that Elizabeth adored Richard, Elisha does love John—and even that poor Gabriel yearns for dead Royal and for living Roy.

Giovanni's Room (1956)

AS IF THE "colour question" were not enough, we now plunge into yet another "social problem," namely the homosexual dilemma.

Before describing Baldwin's treatment of this theme, I may say (for what, coming from me,

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it's worth) what I think about this tiresome topic. In brief, I believe that heterosexuals, bisexuals, and homosexuals of both genders have existed in the world since Eden, and will continue to do so till the last trump sounds. That homosexuality is an aberration cannot be denied: not at all for "moral" reasons, but because it denies one of nature's prime laws, which is the reproduction of our kind. On the other hand nature, in her infinite wisdom, could surely not have constructed the male and female bodies as she did without anticipating that these deviations would occur—and also, I would guess, without worrying a bit as to whether they would ever be sufficiently widespread to interfere with her eternal plan.

Now all this is realised, and is lived, in many countries I have visited but in the nations of Anglo-saxon puritan tradition—that is to say, principally England and the United States—this simple reality is ferociously denied. In these sad lands the heterosexual, fearing perhaps to be mistaken for anything else (which no man or woman who fully is such need ever fear a second), beat on their hairy chests or fertile bosoms in fervently anxious rejections of the homosexual. Conversely, the Anglo-saxon puritan queer—who must surely be one of the most unpleasant and tedious of creatures the globe has yet inflicted on itself—seeks to make out of his deviation a grotesquely vainglorious cult of total boredom and stupidity.

That moral and social problems do arise from homosexuality cannot be questioned; that they also do from heterosexuality cannot either. And I would advance as an absolute maxim that the greater the degree of obsession with this matter in any society, the greater will be the social frustration and torment it engenders. Now if this be true, we may see a parallel—which I hope any coloured reader will excuse—between the "homosexual problem" and the "Negro problem." The plain fact about both is that neither is: the Negro is not a problem to himself, but to the racialist; the "problem" of queerdom resides in the hearts of queer-haters and of those who, being queers, either glorify the commonplace or deny their own inner natures. And in general I would add that, whenever human beings call anything whatever a "problem," you may be almost certain that it is not one, but man-made and soluble. The only true problems in our world are poverty and pain, and their alleviation; but blinding our wilful eyes to these cruel and perilous anxieties, we seek for substitute "problems" with horrible success.

One further prefatory remark to *Giovanni's Room*. In it, James Baldwin, who is a Negro, writes exclusively of whites—so successfully that anyone who did not know what race he has the honour to belong to could never guess, from any internal evidence whatever, that he was other than a white himself. I do not insist on this feat as being extraordinary, since any writer of competence and imagination *must* be able to enter minds and spirits entirely different from his own. For after all, male writers—unless they be the authors of *Billy Budd* or *Robinson Crusoe*—must devise convincing characters of the other sex, and vice versa; and this is frequently achieved triumphantly. No one, for instance, can doubt that Manon Lescaut really is a girl although she was created by a man; or that Chéri is a boy, despite Colette's having invented him. And if you can manage this initial bit of legerdemain, why should you not, in imagination, change your race successfully? Othello, to anyone who knows Africans, unmistakably is one (there were hundreds of Africans in England in Shakespeare's day, and I do not doubt he chatted them for hours in taverns round Wapping or elsewhere). The white characters in Chinua Achebe's Nigerian novels are, just as pertinently, Englishmen.

Yet Baldwin's choice of a white setting for his second novel does raise two thoughts about it. The first is that the switch of mood, from *Go Tell It on the Mountain* to *Giovanni's Room*, is so astonishing. Even a white with no knowledge —or better, love—of Negroes, will instantly, on reading the first novel, feel himself plunged into a different racial world. Conversely, I imagine no Negro, reading the second book, would suppose himself, for a moment, in a coloured one. The next thought is—why did Baldwin set his homosexual theme in a white society? Was it because this aberration is more characteristic of our race than his? With all respect, I do not think this can be the reason. Was it because he feared an unfavourable reaction by his race had he portrayed a coloured gay society? This cannot be the reason either since, as we shall see, this situation is confronted in the third novel, *Another Country*. My own belief is that the true explanation is the simplest one. Baldwin had lived in Paris, and wanted to write a novel in this décor. Despite a Negro presence, what is characteristic of Paris is that it is, among so many things, a cosmopolitan white city. Therefore Giovanni is an Italian, and the "I" of the book a white American. What, at all events, is positive is this: there is no "getting at" white Americans because the fallen hero of the book is what he is; for James Baldwin's reasons for criticising white Americans are infinitely profounder than this one could ever be.

The "plot," then, of *Giovanni's Room* is, by comparison with that of the earlier book, a simple

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one; indeed, the work is more a *nouvelle* than a novel and, in certain non-realistic passages, more in the nature of a prose poem than a work of fiction. David, the young American son of an amiable but characterless and boozy father, and whose mother died in his infancy, has had, in adolescence, a homosexual experience—which attracts and frightens him—and is now an expatriate in Paris engaged to Hella, who is away travelling in Spain. Through his acquaintance Jacques, an elderly queen from whom he is obliged to borrow money, he is introduced to Guillaume's queer bar where the new and splendiferous barman is Giovanni. A drunken night culminating in a hectically romantic early breakfast at the Halles brings David to Giovanni's lodgings in the outer suburbs. There David remains for several months, falling out of love with Giovanni even to the extent of engineering a loveless affair with the rich American girl Sue. When Hella returns from Spain, David returns to her entirely, to Giovanni's consternation. But when Giovanni murders the odious bar-owner Guillaume, and is to be guillotined for this, David feels himself responsible for Giovanni's death and turns against Hella who, finding David is now reverting to a homosexual pattern, leaves him in detestation.

I MUST SAY at once I think the realistic passages of the book are admirable, and its more important psychological conclusions much less so. In a nutshell, the flaw seems to me to be that *Giovanni's Room* is—whereas the earlier book only seemed at first to be—a melodrama. In tone, the work has a sort of Edgar Allen Poe fatality, and one cannot but feel the writer has fallen into the fatal trap (the Thomas Hardy fallacy, one might say) of manipulating fate for a pre-determined purpose, instead of making it —in the manner of the Greeks—appear as an inevitable force arising from the logic of event and character. And I would go on to suggest that this defect arises from an ambiguity in the writer's own attitude to homosexuality. The "moral" of the work is that homosexuality is doomed, and brings doom. This may very well in fact be true, but the trouble is Baldwin makes it seem less true to life as he describes it than to a preconception that his characters must be condemned.

The book's title, and the room itself are, I suppose, a symbol: that of the sterility and self-destruction of homosexual love. Giovanni's lodging is in a grim street far from the centres of Parisian life, it is squalid and disorganised in appearance, and it looks out on a wall—or rather, does not, for Giovanni has painted the window over. It is their first meeting, and Giovanni is speaking:

> "Look at the garbage of this city... where do they take it? I don't know where they take it—but it might very well be my room."

And David reflects:

> This was not the garbage of Paris, which would have been anonymous: this was Giovanni's regurgitated life... for this was not a matter of habit or circumstance or temperament; it was a matter of punishment and grief.

Giovanni and David are both by experience bisexuals with the important difference that Giovanni is a true one (that is to say, his loves for both women and men have hitherto been instinctive and unclouded), whereas David fears and regrets his own homosexuality however strongly it impels him. This is in one sense simply a distinction between the Latin-pagan and the Anglo-saxon-puritan temperaments, but it also involves a contradiction that I find hard to accept in the characters of these two men as Baldwin evokes them. For that David would turn against the homosexual element in his nature is entirely credible; but that Giovanni, as the writer had revealed him, would be destroyed by David's leaving him, I find hard to believe. And when the author tells us

> Beneath the joy, of course, was anguish, and beneath the amazement was fear [which] had become the surface on which we slipped and slid, losing balance, dignity and pride....

I am bound to feel that when the author says "we" it is a case of Baldwin-David, so to speak, imposing reactions on Baldwin-Giovanni that are alien to the nature of the latter. Nor can I credit that a—to put it crudely—proud bisexual butch Italian—albeit one lonely, poor, emotional and without strong will—which Giovanni is shown to be in the earlier part of the book, should become, in a mere matter of months, and as the result of *any* happening, the venal hysterical fairy that he does. The "room," and its fatality, exist in David's imagination from the start, and rightly so, he being divided in his heart; but that it should be, for Giovanni, a potential prison cell—the analogy is actually made with a real cell by the author later on—is far less credible. And when Baldwin tells us

> I do not think I will ever love anyone like that again. And this might be a great relief if I did not also know that, when the knife has fallen, Giovanni, if he feels anything will feel relief....

I really lose touch with him altogether, because I simply don't believe anyone feels "relief" when being guillotined.

BUT WHEN WE COME to realistic descriptions of the cosmopolitan homosexual world, the writer cannot be faulted: he catches exactly its odious and exciting elements and also—a far more difficult feat—the beauty, in which no dogmatic

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heterosexual will ever believe, of the rare homosexual affection. Among the horrors:

> There were the usual paunchy, bespectacled gentlemen with avid, sometimes despairing eyes, the usual knife-blade, lean, tight-trousered boys. One could never be sure, as concerns these latter, whether they were after money or blood or love.

And:

> This lewdness was particularly revolting in that it not only failed of wit, it was so clearly an expression of contempt and self-contempt; it bubbled upward out of them like a fountain of black water.

And more subtly still,

> ...for affection, for the boys I was doomed to look at, was vastly more frightening than lust.

Nor is the writer—ever a moralist, and here a true one—for a moment unaware that loveless heterosexual "love" is just as horrible as any other. For when David uses the girl Sue to escape from Giovanni, he reflects

> But I was thinking that what I did with Giovanni could not possibly be more immoral than what I was about to do with Sue.

Nor does it escape the writer that old women chasing boys can be just as revolting as the old men he has shown us doing so. Correctly, he gives this observation to the girl Hella:

> The way these old hags guzzle and make eyes at anything in pants, especially anything about eighteen—well, I said to myself, Hella, my girl, take a good look. You may be looking at your future.

Nevertheless, we must take it that, in general terms, the author's conclusion is that homosexuality is the greater destruction:

> And at moments like this I felt that we were merely enduring and committing the longer and lesser and more perpetual murder.[2]

Technically, the book is somewhat disturbing. Once again we are submitted to the "flashback" device, but with less assurance than in the earlier work, and at one point the reader may be rather confused by a "flash-forward" to a moment ahead in time of the pivotal period that is initially established. The author also handles the "I" narrative device a little erratically by suddenly presenting us with detailed "he" scenes (for instance in the death cell) which the supposed "I" narrator could not possibly have witnessed.

But to set against these weaknesses I must mention passages not, perhaps, always relevant to the main story, but which reveal yet another aspect of Baldwin's talent, or temperament, which is his wisdom; for deft analysis of human nature, and aphorisms about our lives, abound. For instance:

> Perhaps, as we say in America, I wanted to find myself. This is an interesting phrase, not current so far as I know in the language of any other people, which certainly does not mean what it says, but betrays a nagging suspicion that something has been misplaced.

Or:

> People who remember court madness through pain, the pain of the perpetually recurring death of their innocence; people who forget court another kind of madness, the madness of the denial of pain and the hatred of innocence; and the world is most divided between madmen who remember and madmen who forget.

There are also splendid descriptions of Parisian personages and seasons, of which I would specially mention the evocation of that eternal and formidable figure, the French lady behind the cash-register, and of the summer and autumn which are the metaphor of Giovanni-David's rapture and destruction.

I hope I don't sound patronising if I say I think *Giovanni's Room* is a brave try, however beautiful in parts. It was not all that easy for any writer in English to confront this theme in 1956 and, more particularly, a Negro writer who was already vulnerable on so many other grounds to mean and hostile criticism. One difficulty, of course, is that the Anglo-saxon reading public is not yet ready, even to-day, for a book on this subject which can take it straight without the writer having to look over six shoulders at once to avoid all kinds of misinterpretation.

Another Country (1962)

THIS IS THE least overtly personal of James Baldwin's novels, the most ambitious and, I regret to have to say, the least successful. The theme is most promising, for Baldwin here unites the two races and examines the relations between whites and blacks in contemporary New York.

Rufus, a dazzling, self-torturing coloured jazz musician, is the friend of Vivaldo, a "good liberal" white writer of Italian-Irish descent. Vivaldo, between bouts of whoring up in Harlem, is at-

[2] For anyone interested in the disputed question of the origins in childhood of homosexual inclination we may notice that Baldwin does not give David the conventional over-loving mother—since she is long dead—but a weakly affectionate father and a hard foster-mother... to my own mind just as likely an explanation.

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tached to a slatternly white Greenwich Village painter called Jane; and, when the book begins, Rufus has begun an affair with a poor-white expatriate from the South named Lena. This affair, which begins on a high note of sexual excitement, ends in Lena's madness and Rufus' suicide, for the black and white pasts of the two lovers rise up and drive them both to hatred and destruction.

Ida, Rufus' younger sister, and soon to be a successful jazz singer, now starts a love affair with Vivaldo which is the central topic of the book. Throughout its tempestuous progress the author examines, in immensely painful detail, all the forces, personal and racial, that make love between black and white almost impossible. Vivaldo and Ida finally survive their ordeal by the self-knowledge, and knowledge of each other, they acquire through it—which chiefly involves the white liberal man rejecting facile "solutions" and learning to live, as Ida must, with the racial problem haunting every moment of his life. "I don't want you to be *understanding*," Ida says to him in a final scene. "I don't want you to be kind . . ." and at their last embrace, the author describes the black girl "stroking his innocence out of him."

Subsidiary characters are Eric, a rich white actor who has escaped from Alabama, a former lover of Rufus, and now of a French ex-male prostitute called Yves. Also Cass, a white woman of "good family" who is married to the ex-Polish Richard, a bad but successful novelist—this being a "white racial" tangle that enables Baldwin to echo the profounder conflicts of Rufus-Lena and of Vivaldo-Ida. To this one must add that since all the principal male characters (except Richard) turn out to be bisexual, there is a good deal of homosexual bed-switching—as well as liaisons between some of the characters of a more orthodox kind.

To begin with the book's virtues, one may say it is a wonderful, if scarifying, portrait of New York, about which great agglomeration the writer makes us feel that all Manhattan Island ("the world's most bewildered city"), and not just Harlem, is a ghetto of imprisoned and self-imprisoned human victims. The author both implies this constantly and states it at times overtly:

> It might, almost, for strange barbarity of manner and custom, for the sense of danger and horror barely sleeping beneath the rough, gregarious surface, have been some impenetrably exotic city of the East.

And on New Yorkers:

> They seemed . . . to be at home with, accustomed to, brutality and indifference, and to be terrified of human affection. In some strange way they did not seem to feel that they were worthy of it.

As most of the scenes take place in the depths of winter, we are made to feel the harsh climate reflects the cruel spirit of the city; but even when summer comes things aren't much better:

> The heat and the noise began their destruction of nerves and sanity and private lives and love affairs. The air was full of baseball scores and bad news and treacly songs; and the streets and the bars were full of hostile people, made more hostile by the heat.

The evocations of the blighted love of Rufus for Lena, and of the ultimately successful one of Vivaldo for Rufus' sister Ida—and even more, perhaps, of the male black-white friendship of Rufus and Vivaldo—are often most touching, as well as profoundly revealing of the huge obstacles to inter-racial affections. And though the writer places most of the blame for this frustration upon the whites—which in one sense is only just, since the overall racial situation in the U.S. is white-created—he is very ready to allow that blacks have been equally distorted by these circumstances. Thus, Rufus excuses his cruelty to Lena by accusing her of loving only his sex (which is untrue), Vivaldo sees that his friend Rufus hates him because, though white, he *is* nevertheless his only true friend, and Lena is made to realise that Rufus' hatred for her is really because, being black, he can't believe he's "good enough" for her. The author is also just in showing that there are far blinder white liberals than Vivaldo—who is at least *trying*, at the cost of pain—and introduces us to a hideous gallery of these spiritual eunuchs. But his final conclusion seems to be that, save in the rarest and most agony-racked of unions, true illumination and equality between the races will be rare. Rufus and Vivaldo, for example, may at first seem to us, for a black and white, to be unusually intimate. But:

> And yet how much, as it turned out, had each kept hidden in his heart from the other!

And when he gives the ensuing terrible speech to Ida, one cannot but feel his own message is that almost all whites, however well-intentioned, still have everything to learn:

> "What you people don't know," she said, "is that life is a *bitch*, baby. It's the biggest hype going. You don't have any experience in paying your dues and it's going to be rough on you, baby, when the deal goes down. There's lots of back dues to be collected, and I know damn well you haven't got a penny saved."

Interspersed throughout the novel one may also find many of those acute observations of life and character that have the unmistakable Baldwin terseness and penetration:

> The waiter entered the room, looking as though he wondered where on earth he could be. . . .
>
> They shook hands and murmured salutations in a silence that began to stiffen like the beaten white of an egg.

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> Strangers' faces hold no secrets because the imagination does not invest them with any. But the face of a lover is an unknown precisely because it is invested with so much of oneself.
>
> The trouble with a secret life is that it is very frequently a secret from the person who lives it and not at all a secret for the people he encounters.
>
> For the act of love is a confession. One lies about the body but the body does not lie about itself; it cannot lie about the force which drives it.

THEN WHAT HAS gone wrong with the book? In a general way, I would say that *Another Country* is much too bulky for what it has to say. The passages in which Baldwin makes his points, and makes them splendidly, are buried amid vast wastelands that neither add to nor prepare for the declaration of his essential themes. There is an immense amount of dialogue, but a great deal of it is what I would never have believed possible in any page Baldwin wrote, which is simply dull. It is not just a matter of "cutting"—though even this, I think, would have often been a help. For example, I ask myself (turning rather niggly) what on earth this can add to anything?

> She turned to Jane and Vivaldo. "So long, kids. See you soon."
>
> "Sure," Jane said.
>
> "I'm expecting you," Richard said, "don't fail me. So long, Jane."
>
> "So long."
>
> "So long."

It is true that, in his record of white speech, the author is excellent at catching the ominous facetiousness, the tone of menace combined with frenetic optimism, that characterises so much American conversation: the note of *battle* underlying the "friendliest" remark. But too often the dialogue is not human speech at all, but a case of the writer, somewhat languidly, using his characters' voices as mere vehicles for his own not very astringent thoughts.

As for sexual episodes, although there are glorious moments (and let no one imagine the author of *Giovanni's Room* cannot evoke the passions of men and women), the effect is frequently turgid and high-flown: the worst passages being almost like inflated set-piece parodies of the best. The obscenities given to the characters are sometimes disturbing not because of themselves, but because they add little to any effect, so that it is almost as if the author is writing them out of his system at the unfortunate reader's expense. As for the bisexual element, although I personally would be the last to deny its validity in general (since I believe it to be far more widespread than homosexuality), its introduction does sometimes seem to me frankly improbable. For instance, I just can't believe that Eric, who is presented to us as a dedicated queer from childhood, would suddenly have had an affair with Cass (Clarissa) for which nothing in his character prepares us. And although I know Americans drink a lot (so do we, but we don't drink against ourselves as they do), I do wish the bourbon bottles and ice cubes had clinked rather less frequently throughout the volume. (The trouble about making your characters drunk too often is that you must then either make them talk drunk and be bores, or talk sober and be incredible.)

Structurally, the book is weak. Not only does our old friend (or enemy to clarity), the flashback, make once more its fell appearance—and here, I feel, for no valid artistic reason—but the ending is inconclusive in the extreme. The author has already resolved his principal theme —the Ida-Vivaldo triumph over race—in the penultimate chapter, when, lo and behold, young Yves descends from the skies at Idlewild —which episode, though excellently described, leaves the reader, so to speak, up in the air. Perhaps a minor obstacle to enjoyment of the book is that with the exception of the two chief coloured characters, Rufus and Ida—and just possibly their friend Vivaldo—the personages are, in themselves, so uninteresting. This need not, of course, exclude the possibility of the author's making them so—most of the cast of *War and Peace*, for instance (particularly the entire Rostov family) would, in reality have been terrible bores to meet—and would anyone in his senses wish to spend even five minutes with anybody whatever in *A Passage to India*? But the trouble is that, artistically speaking, so many of the persons in this book seem dingy; and that in it, Baldwin is really too much of a realist. Life may indeed be like that, but it is to avoid its tedium, and seek after enlightenment, that we read novels. One explanation of this defect may be that Greenwich Village, with more frauds to the square foot than even in Islington or Chelsea, is a most unpromising décor for a writer of James Baldwin's calibre.

But Rufus and Ida do redeem the book: Ida, "haughty and free," and her wonderful doomed brother, who recalls the seductive Richard of the first novel. Baldwin has a superb instinct for brushing aside the clichés about his people and showing us all their majesty—and their failings. His conclusions about their relations with ourselves may be pessimistic, but—until better days, pray God, soon dawn—one must feel rightly so. Here we all are at present, in a New York subway, on our journey to superfluous perdition:

> Many white people and many black people, chained together in time and in space, and by

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history, and all of them in a hurry. In a hurry to get away from each other, he thought, but we ain't never going to make it.

The Collected Essays

THERE ARE three books of these, *Notes of a Native Son* (1955), *Nobody Knows My Name* (1961), and *The Fire Next Time* of the present year; and since certain themes recur in each collection, I shall consider these essays all together.

The first quality in these essays is their extraordinary *tone*. Baldwin was just over thirty when the first collection appeared—and many of the essays were of course written when he was even younger—but already the note of authority is as unmistakable as it is unforced. As to the style, if I may borrow his own description of jazz and gospel songs—"taut, ironic, authoritative, and double-edged"—these fit exactly. To them I would add a natural dignity, a sadly acid wit, and an enormous, quite uncondescending—if exigently demanding—humanity.

Their chief theme is race, and all I can say about Baldwin's analysis of this ghastly topic is that if there is anything conceivable to add, I cannot imagine what it may be. Hearing him is not always a pleasurable experience—it is, in fact, apart from the beauty of his prose, usually an embarrassing one—but at least, having read him, you can no longer feel you do not *know*, if only at second hand. In a final section I shall describe his analysis of the racial dilemma; but before doing so—and perhaps somewhat absurdly, since almost all the essays return inevitably to this focal point—I shall consider their subjects in a more general "literary" way:

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SOURCES OF HIS OWN NOVELS: These are to be found in minute detail in many of the essays, and are of great interest to readers who may wish to relate the experience of life to the creation of art. There are vivid descriptions of the New York (and Parisian) setting of the books, and a most touching portrait of the writer's father who, one may guess, was the original of Gabriel in the first novel. Forays into the deep South—the "Old Country" to northern Negroes, yet a foreign land in any human sense—are eloquently and painfully described.

LITERARY AND ARTISTIC CRITICISM: Among artists and their creations that are analysed are *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (devastatingly); the "coloured" film, *Carmen Jones* (even more so); a critique of Faulkner's racial theories (which sink without a trace, despite Baldwin's respect for Faulkner as an artist); André Gide; the films of Bergman; and the affectionate quarrel of the writer with Norman Mailer. No less than three essays are devoted to the life and work of Richard Wright, in relation to whom Baldwin was both extremely close, and as distant as any two writers could be. But although his criticism of Wright's art and social ideas is unremitting, it is equally generous, for Baldwin is the first to allow the huge debt he owes to his precursor.

U.S. NEGROES AND AFRICANS: Just as Baldwin is haunted by the black-white relationship in general, so he is—as all U.S. Negroes must be—with the contact that can be made with the African descendants of their same ancestors. This theme recurs in several essays, and is chiefly developed in *Princes and Powers*, an account of the Conference of Negro-African Writers and Artists at the Sorbonne (published in ENCOUNTER, January 1957). His most striking reaction to the strangers is, "The Africans seemed at once simpler and more devious, more directly erotic and at the same time more subtle, and they were proud."

U.S. NEGROES AND EUROPEANS: Among this group of essays the most memorable—and tragi-comic—is the harrowing account of the author's imprisonment in Paris, one Christmas, on the false charge of being a receiver of stolen goods (the "goods" in question being a bed sheet). There is a revealing account also of the amazement with which Baldwin's presence was greeted in an Alpine village where no coloured man had ever been seen before.

The remaining essays—about one-half in all—deal directly with the colour theme. Of these the most famous and remarkable is *Down at the Cross*, which appeared originally in *The New Yorker* earlier this year under the title *Letter from a Region of my Mind*; and which (accompanying a heartfelt *Letter to my Nephew*) constitutes the most recent book, with its ominous title of *The Fire Next Time*. I suppose almost everyone has now read this essay—Mr. Robert Kennedy surely has—and it deals, among many things, with Baldwin's reaction to an encounter with Elijah Muhammad, leader of the Black Muslims, and with his followers including his heir apparent, Malcolm X.

The white liberal reaction to the news that James Baldwin had met Elijah Muhammad would of course be, "But naturally, he will see this man is no more than a dangerous black racist impostor!" But if anyone does think that, they understand neither Baldwin, nor the Black Muslims, nor the Negro people as a whole. One has only to read some of the detailed interviews with Malcolm X to see that this zealot is no coloured Alfred Rosenberg, but a lucid, passionate, and highly intelligent prophet whose declarations, however detestable, are unanswerable within their own terms of reference.

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That is to say, given what Negroes were promised 100 years ago at the Emancipation, and given the massive betrayal of these promises, the extreme position Malcolm X adopts has a horrible logic and, despite the atrocity of his conclusions, an austerely undeniable truth.

That Baldwin has much sympathy for the Muslim position cannot be doubted (who *can* fail to have sympathy for it in some measure?), yet he is too fine a human being, as well as a black human being, to accept it. But I must insist that it would be folly for us whites to take it for granted that Negro artists and intellectuals, simply because we somewhat patronisingly admire them, will all automatically deny the Muslim message and its perils to ourselves. Let it not be forgotten that, in Europe of the 'thirties, the fascists claimed many an intellectual. And the only way we can hope to ensure that Malcolm X does not win the Negro intellectuals' loyalty is by hearkening to their warnings—and even to those of Malcolm X—and *acting* upon these without any more delay.

WHAT, THEN, IS the racial message these alarming essays leave us with? If liberalism is not enough, what does Baldwin ask of us? And ask of all whites, not only white Americans (though his message is, of course, directed most particularly to them), because we Britons, for example, have a profound responsibility in this matter. We, not Americans, took the first black slaves to the Americas; we have a black colonial past and, even to-day, a black colonial present; we too have a coloured minority in our midst; and most of all, we are part of that internationally *white minority* (for whites are now a minute, almost eccentric, fraction of the global population) that must learn how to come to human terms with the multitude of coloured races if only to avoid our own destruction by them.

First, we can try to follow Baldwin's analysis of the predicament, and extract from it the following propositions:

We must not expect the impossible of Negroes, but realise what they are.

I can conceive of no Negro native to this country who has not, by the age of puberty, been irreplaceably scarred by the conditions of his life.

I am not one of the people who believe that oppression imbues a people with wisdom or insight or sweet charity, though the survival of the Negro in this country would simply not have been possible if this bitterness had been all he felt.

The African before him has endured privation, injustice, medieval cruelty; but the African has not yet endured the utter alienation of himself from his people and his past.

I am proud of these people not because of their colour but because of their intelligence and their spiritual force and their beauty.

A ghetto can be improved in only one way: out of existence.

We must see estrangement from Negroes is estrangement from ourselves.

The ways in which the Negro has affected the American psychology are betrayed in our popular culture and in our morality; in our estrangement from him is the depth of our estrangement from ourselves.

Hatred, which could destroy so much, never failed to destroy the man who hated and this was an immutable law.

At the root of the American Negro problem is the necessity of the American white man to find a way of living with the Negro in order to be able to live with himself.

It is a terrible, an inexorable, law that one cannot deny the humanity of another without diminishing one's own: in the face of one's victim, one sees oneself.

We must understand the real roots of the problem.

But the dispute has actually nothing to do with education, as some among the eminently uneducated know. It has to do with political power and it has to do with sex. And this is a nation which, most unluckily, knows very little about either.

We would never, never allow Negroes to starve, to grow bitter, and to die in ghettoes all over the country if we were not driven by some nameless fear that has nothing to do with Negroes.

It is only too clear that even with the most malevolent will in the world Negroes can never manage to achieve one-tenth of the harm which we fear.

And this reason, this fear, suggests to me one of the real reasons for the status of the Negro in this country. In a way, the Negro tells us where the bottom is: *because he is there*, and *where* he is, beneath us, we know where the limits are and how far we must not fall.

It is still true, alas, that to be an American Negro male is also to be a kind of walking phallic symbol: which means that one pays, in one's own personality, for the sexual insecurity of others.

White Americans find it as difficult as white people elsewhere to divest themselves of the notion that they are in possession of some intrinsic value that black people need, or want.

Therefore, a vast amount of the energy that goes into what we call the Negro problem is produced by the white man's profound desire not to be judged by those who are not white, not to be seen as he is, and at the same time a vast amount of the white anguish is rooted in the

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white man's equally profound need to be seen as he is, to be released from the tyranny of his mirror.

Colour is not a human or a personal reality: it is a political reality.

We must realise what ALL *human creatures really are.*

Let us say, then, that truth, as used here, is meant to imply a devotion to the human being, his freedom and fulfilment; freedom which cannot be legislated, fulfilment which cannot be charted.

But our humanity is our burden, our life; we need not battle for it; we need only to do what is infinitely more difficult—that is, accept it.

I imagine that one of the reasons people cling to their hates so stubbornly is because they sense, once hate is gone, that they will be forced to deal with pain.

It is really quite impossible to be affirmative about anything which one refuses to question; one is doomed to remain inarticulate about anything which one hasn't, by an act of the imagination, made one's own.

What, in sum, black men held in common was their ache to come into the world as men.

We must overcome the wish to save, and learn to BE *saved.*

... it is we, who, every hour that we live, re-invest the black face with our guilt; and we do this—by a further paradox, no less ferocious—helplessly, passionately, out of an unrealised need to suffer absolution.

"I am not at all sure," states one prominent Negro, who is *not* a Muslim, "that I *want* to be integrated into a burning house."

Love does not begin and end the way we seem to think it does. Love is a battle, love is war; love is growing up.

There is no reason for you to try to become like white people and there is no basis whatever for their impertinent assumption that *they* must accept *you.*

We must realise the time is now.

And if the word *integration* means anything, this is what it means: that we, with love, shall force our brothers to see themselves as they are, to cease fleeing from reality and begin to change it.

It is galling indeed to have stood so long, hat in hand, waiting for Americans to grow up enough to realise that you do not threaten them.

He [the Negro] is *the* key figure in this country, and the American future is precisely as bright or as dark as his.

The price of the liberation of the white people is the liberation of the blacks—the total liberation, in the cities, in the towns, before the law, and in the mind.

The challenge is in the moment, the time is always now.

IF I HAVE called this study, rather romantically, *Dark Angel,* this is not simply because its subject is a Negro, and his temperament and character one of the most lovable of any I have yet encountered ("a very tight, tense, lean, abnormally ambitious, abnormally intelligent, and hungry black cat"). It is because my words have also a double meaning: *dark* being not only coloured, but used in the sense of "dark irony" (*humour noir*)—an insidious, mocking, dangerous, challenging, seriously subversive tone that may be felt in all Baldwin's writings. And when I think of *angels* I think, certainly, of guardian ones, and of visitants from heaven who bring tidings of joy and comfort to mankind, but also remember that angels are perilous creatures, often appearing with a sword to warn, admonish, even scarify and scourge.

Yet may one offer counsel even to an angel? First, I do not believe Baldwin, despite his intense consciousness of us, and his personal friendships with so many white people since he became a writer, knows at all what the white man's, or woman's, predicament is in relation to the problem that so constantly harasses his spirit. It may seem a hypocritical impertinence for any white to say to any Negro, "We have suffered more than you," yet I believe that there is much truth in this. For if you are wronged that is horrible, but your spirit, though tortured, can remain pure; but if you have wronged, and know it, you know also not just desperation, but pangs of remorse that nothing—not even atonement—can ever alleviate.

My other admonition (turning at long last the tables!) is this one. Baldwin has told us, in the essays, how Richard Wright, his mentor, reached the point at which, on the "colour question," he had said his say but did not realise it. Might not now—though in an entirely different context—an identical danger threaten the hero of this essay? It is not that anyone could wish he should change his ideas by one iota, nor be less faithful to the cause which he has made his own—and one which has nourished and ennobled him, as he has it. It is not either, I do hope, that I am being here a crafty white, trying to seduce, by a "sophisticated" argument, the black man from his essential devotion. It is rather that one must wonder what, *as a writer,* James Baldwin is going to tell us now? Could it not be the same tale told, even more profoundly, in an entirely different form? For after all, Bessie Smith, whom Baldwin so much admires, made her message about the coloured situation all the more specific and eternal by dint of never singing precisely what this message was.

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Alastair Buchan

The Age of Insecurity (II)

Towards an Ungrand Design

IN THE JUNE ISSUE of ENCOUNTER I set out some of the considerations that prompt me to doubt whether a stable balance of military power, and hence a stable system of international security, can be maintained over the next decade or more by the kinds of policies that East and West have pursued over the past fifteen years. In particular, the rate of technological innovation, and the divorce between strategic planning and diplomacy which the complexity of modern weapon technology enforces, make it doubtful whether unilateral attempts by both sides to maintain an up-to-date posture of deterrence vis-à-vis each other can lead to anything but an upward spiral of major armaments. And a very high level of strategic nuclear armaments, without any improvement in the means of communicating intentions between the great powers, is likely to lead to a state of paralysis in their relations which carries with it the danger that they might lose control of the course of events.

This is a danger that even the toughest guardians of national security feel. As Mr. Robert Macnamara has said in presenting his recent defence budget:

> As the arms race continues and the weapons multiply and become more swift and deadly, the possibility of a global catastrophe, either by miscalculation or design, becomes ever more real. More armaments, whether offensive or defensive, cannot solve this dilemma.
>
> We are approaching an era when it will become increasingly improbable that either side could destroy a sufficiently large portion of the other's strategic nuclear force, either by surprise or otherwise, to preclude a devastating retaliatory blow. This may result in mutual deterrence but it is still a grim prospect.
>
> It underscores the need for a renewed effort to find some way, if not to eliminate these deadly weapons completely, then at least to slow down or halt their further accumulation, and to create institutional arrangements which would reduce the need for either side to resort to their immediate use in moments of acute international tension.
>
> The United States and the Soviet Union, as the two great nuclear powers, are the nations most directly endangered by these weapons and therefore have a great mutual interest in seeing to it that they are never used.

Before attempting to suggest ways in which this danger may be mitigated, it is important to examine the relationship of the two major powers to the rest of the world. If we look at their geographic position, the distribution of their population, their industrial and scientific capacity, and their experience in the field of nuclear power, I think we shall find that in terms of crude military power not only do they tower above the other nations (or even groups of nations) at the moment, but that they will for a long time. They both have very large land areas, some of it desert which can be used with safety for land-based strategic systems. They both have a relatively low population density. Both have easy access to testing areas for warheads or missiles. They both have a certain degree of warning of attack. They both have a very high level of applied technology in the field of long-range weapons, and over a decade of experience in building them.

No other country, or group, possesses all these qualifications. China may soon produce a rudimentary nuclear deterrent, but will lack, for many years, the resources to match the diversity of Soviet or American power, as well as being permanently more vulnerable. The same is true of India. Japan has the technologists but is hopelessly vulnerable. Canada and Australia have

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the empty land areas but not the resources. Germany has the resources but not the land, and is further hemmed in, not only by the presence of Soviet power on her borders, but also by solemn commitments to allies which she could only break at the risk of being ejected from the Western system. Even seaborne missile systems cannot alter geography.

OUR MAJOR UNCERTAINTY concerns a European Community of which Britain may finally become a member, and which decides that the new concept of Atlantic partnership, and the pride of a group of former great powers, necessitates the building of a strong system of nuclear deterrence under European control. There is no doubt that British resources could supply the nuclear element without difficulty. It is also probable that British, French, German, and Italian industry could—even without American co-operation—design and build the aircraft, nuclear submarines, and land-based missiles to provide much the same diversity of deterrent power as the two present super powers now possess, though on a smaller scale. There is no doubt that the new Community, which now spends less than 5 per cent of its gross national product on defence where the United States spends over 10 per cent and the Soviet Union nearly 20 per cent, could, if it chose, afford the substantial rise in public expenditure which these new weapons would entail.

There is no doubt also that the ambition exists in many European hearts, and not only in the Elysée, to make the new Europe into a superpower in the military sense, to cast off the American leading strings and reassert Europe's rightful place in the counsels of the great nations. But those who toy with this prospect must reckon with three factors.

1. *Western Europe's vulnerability.* Next to Japan it is the most densely populated area in the Western system and contains 75 major cities, many of them adjacent to each other.

2. *The effect upon the Soviet Union* of this attempt to establish a new great power in Europe. This new entity is made up of countries that, in many ways, are more dynamic than any others in the world, and one of whom has an unsettled territorial argument with the Communist bloc. The Soviet Union has come to recognise that the awful weight of nuclear responsibility has made the United States a cautious power. Would she have the same confidence that such caution would prevail in the counsels of the new Europe? Since it would take six to eight years to produce an up-to-date array of strategic nuclear weapons in Europe, would the Soviet Union let this force slowly gather strength upon the border from which she has often been attacked in the past?

3. *The structure of Europe itself.* At the moment we can see no further than a pragmatic system of political co-ordination of national foreign and defence policies as the economic bonds grow stronger (though even this prospect has been diminished by the actions of President de Gaulle). Even if we can foresee the founding of a Federal system of government in the next decade or so, we cannot realistically envisage the creation of a unitary state with a powerful central government until many years have gone by. Yet only powerful central governments can acquire the resources and then create the mechanism of command and control to take the swift decisions for which a nuclear super-power must be prepared. Such centralised decision-making can only be the product of many years of slowly evolving internal confidence and unity of outlook. The United States, for instance, by no means had this kind of central government during the first century of its existence, even in times of grave emergency.

At the moment there is a great deal of nuclear naïveté in Europe, and since the United States itself has done much to encourage this image of a united Europe as a new great power, without properly considering the strategic implications, it is not unnatural that Europeans should be examining the question of whether this involves acquiring what has historically been the central characteristic of a great power: namely, the means of pursuing an independent strategy. However, I believe that as these questions become more actively and realistically debated throughout the whole of the new Europe, including Britain, these factors will weigh increasingly.[1]

[1] This view is, of course, hotly contested both by some passionate European Federalists, including the European Movements, and by writers like General Pierre Gallois.

Entangling Alliances

OVER THE NEXT DECADE, and probably for much longer, the problem of international security, especially as it affects the prevention of nuclear war, will continue to centre around the relations between the Soviet Union

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and the United States. The role of the other nations is of great importance, but it will still depend on these two stars whether the play continues.

But if it is true that these two great powers are and will remain of a different order of magnitude from the others, we must also closely examine the difference between their positions, for this crucially affects the level and kind of armaments they consider essential for their own security. On the one hand, the Soviet Union is a land-locked country of vast extent, with interior lines of communication that cover nearly half the land surface of the Northern Hemisphere. Equally important, she has no allies in the sense that the United States has. She has an irresponsible and discontented junior partner in China and a number of nominal allies whom she dominates in Eastern Europe. Above all, she has a highly evolved theory of political action and an adventurous diplomacy which enables her to exert her influence on a world-wide scale. No great damage would be occasioned to Soviet security, whatever might happen to her prestige, by the loss of such outposts as Cuba or North Korea. Her essential requirement is to deter all forms of attack upon her own territory. Only by making absolutely certain that she herself remains inviolate, can she exert her influence beyond the limited circle of her own formal allies. For this purpose her strategic planners have long calculated that she must maintain a relatively strong threat against both cities and military bases in Europe—the ancient highway of invasion and the American bridgehead in her own continent—and an adequate threat to the great open cities and industrial complexes of the United States. This implies a large force of medium-range bombers and missiles, and a smaller long-range force.

The United States, by contrast, is the leader of a vast alliance system which embraces forty-two countries spread over four continents. Moreover, the integrity of many uncommitted countries, such as Sweden and India, is tacitly underwritten by the United States. She and her major allies do not have the stomach or the unity for an adventurous diplomacy, and shorn of her allies, she would revert to her pre-war position as a rich but relatively impotent power. Her alliances are therefore crucial to her own security as well as to her influence in the world.

But these allies are very different from those of the Soviet Union; they are scattered, vociferous, numerous, energetic, and the unspoken condition of their alliance with the United States is that she shall help protect them from war and invasion. Although the deterrence of Soviet attack upon the United States is obviously important, for she is in the heart of this enormous coalition, this alone does not meet the needs of her security. If the Soviet deterrent can be likened to a dome erected over Russia, the American deterrent is a vast envelope stretching round the world and into the Southern hemisphere. As the weight and efficiency of the Soviet nuclear threat against both Europe and the United States itself has increased, it has necessitated (in the American judgment at least) a level of American nuclear power which could not only threaten the destruction of Soviet cities, but also the Soviet offensive bases which, in turn, threaten the cities of America's allies. This has involved the creation of large long-range bomber and missile forces; in the earlier stages of the bomber and the missiles, it also involved large medium-range forces for which the need is now beginning to disappear. But this is not the only distinction. Belatedly the Western powers have recognised that strategic nuclear power is insufficient to maintain this enveloping protection, and that soldiers who can help her poorer allies to resist the subtler forms of Communist activism, subversion, and local blackmail, are as important. For obvious reasons, this dispersed maritime coalition gets much less value out of an individual soldier than a centralised land power, and in consequence the Nato countries maintain one-and-a-half million more men under arms than the countries of the Warsaw Pact.

This distinction between the positions of the two super-powers is important when considering the problems of disarmament or the control of major armaments. The two have been engaged in intermittent negotiations on general disarmament for over ten years, without any practical result, and the 17-nation conference on general and comprehensive disarmament has been sitting in Geneva for over a year without making much significant headway. I have the greatest possible respect for the skill and devotion of all those officials and thinkers who have been working on such plans. I think that these negotiations are in the long run going to produce some very important by-products, but I am equally sure that they are not going to produce universal disarmament by way of a

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tidy packaged treaty to which all the 110 nations of the world, great and small, have set their signature.

Among the many overt disagreements between the Communist and non-Communist powers on the approach to be adopted to disarmament two are well known. One concerns timing. The Soviet proposal is for the total abolition of all forces and armaments within three years, beginning with the total abolition of all nuclear weapons over fifteen months. The American proposal is much more cautious, in proposing a one-third reduction of nuclear and conventional armaments in three stages, each lasting three years. To the West, the Soviet proposals seem quite unrealistic: to the Russians the American proposals smack of procrastination and insincerity.

The other concerns the familiar disagreement over inspection, where the Russians regard the Western insistence on the necessity of inspecting the level of retained armaments in each stage as "legalised espionage." The West regards the Soviet insistence that the inspectors must take a nation's declaration of its original inventory on trust and only inspect the destruction of those armaments which it declares, as a ready-made formula for cheating. So far the Russians have refused to consider the ingenious ideas of Professor Louis Sohn of Harvard, now embodied in the American proposals, for a system of inspection by zones which would give the inspectorate some opportunity to assess whether a nation was carrying out its obligations, without laying bare all its defence secrets during the disarmament process.

The Soviet view on inspection may change, perhaps as American reconnaissance satellites begin to lay bare the dispositions of bases and forces whose secrecy she had assumed she could protect indefinitely by political means. The Americans, in their turn, may accept a more adventurous time scale for the disarmament process. But even so I am sceptical, for several reasons, as to whether these grandiose schemes for comprehensive disarmament have the smell of probability.

Consider, for one thing, the responsibilities of the central peace-keeping machinery, the International Disarmament Organisation, which would become the world's policeman in the place of national forces. We now have some experience of international forces operating under the ægis of the U.N., of their limitations as well as their potentialities. Given the nature of the East-West cleavage, given the number of sovereign states that now exist, is it wise to expect that we could, in this generation, create a body under central direction which could act with the independence, speed, and ruthless disregard for national susceptibilities which would be required of such a peace-keeping agency? It may not be impossible for, in a revolutionary age, the unlikeliest developments become possible: but it is certainly doubtful.

Moreover, this attempt to make progress with disarmament, which is spurred on by the fear of nuclear war, comes at an unlucky moment in modern history. In the days of the League of Nations the whole world was effectively controlled by some thirty sovereign countries, and had they succeeded in signing a disarmament treaty, they could have imposed a system of world order which might well have survived the inevitable process of decolonisation. But when the pride and sovereign status of over 100 nations are involved, the problem of evolving a world system of disarmament, let alone maintaining it, is much harder. Last October we witnessed the successful defiance by a small Caribbean country of a U.N. request, backed up by the authority of the two super-powers, to inspect the dismantling of missile sites on its territory. If this can happen in a world in which the great powers possess their present superiority over the smaller ones, how much confidence can we have that the later stages of a disarmament agreement, when they have lost much of this superiority, would prove universally enforceable? Yet if arms are to be hidden or retained in the balkanised areas of the world, for how long would the larger powers respect such an agreement?

Finally, there is the difficult question of the differing security requirements of the Western maritime coalition and the Eurasian land power during the transitional process of disarming. Not unnaturally the Soviet desire is to break up this coalition which—on the whole successfully—contains and confines the expansion of its own influence and power. Soviet disarmament proposals must therefore be couched in terms which would mean the almost immediate folding of the American umbrella of deterrence, the return of American forces to their own soil, and the abolition of the ships and aircraft which are the military cement of the coalition. Western proposals, equally naturally, are couched in terms of percentage reductions of the forces and weapons of both sides, which would preserve the

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coalition intact until the disarmament process was completed, but would markedly diminish Russia's power to protect herself against the United States if anything should go wrong during this same time span. It is true that the Soviet Union is now prepared to consider retaining a minimum nuclear deterrent on each side during this period. It is also true that the U.S. may be prepared to accept a swifter run-down of its own strategic forces than of the Soviets. But I am not at all sure that the differing strategic requirements of the two sides can be bridged by any schematic approach to the problem of disarmament.

The Future of Super-Powers

YET IF FORMAL disarmament negotiations may lead us nowhere, how can the dangers of the balance of terror be mitigated or the arms race be halted? If we dig deep enough, can we discover areas of genuine common interest between the super-powers which transcend their political differences?

Apart from the settlement of outstanding political difference (*e.g.*, Berlin), two sorts of initiative are possible—specific multilateral agreements between the super-powers and the other leading states designed to mitigate the most dangerous features of the present confrontation and to eliminate foreseeable dangers of the future, and unilateral acts of restraint designed both for this purpose and to create an atmosphere of greater confidence.

The only serious negotiations on arms control which has survived the storms of last few years, is that for a ban on nuclear tests, and its history is an instructive guide to the future. In 1958 there began to be a growing alarm in the world about the genetic effects of tests. The Western powers (as Dr. Hans Bethe, the famous American physicist, has disarmingly admitted in a recent article) at that time saw two special advantages in a nuclear test ban.[2] The Americans knew that they had a marked lead in the design of nuclear warheads, which they wished to freeze, and they also wished to exploit this universal sense of fear to force the Soviet Union to accept the principle of international inspection as a precedent for future disarmament agreements. The Soviet Union, in turn, could not neglect world opinion, probably underestimated its technical inferiority, and was anxious to prevent the spread of nuclear weapon industries to other countries. A moratorium was proclaimed and negotiations were embarked upon. They bogged down for months and years because the Western requirements for inspection were too onerous for the Soviet Union to accept, and the moratorium itself collapsed in August, 1961, as the next generation of weapons created new requirements for warhead testing. It now looks as if we may get a Test Ban Treaty, signed at least by the three leading nuclear powers, but that it will have little immediate value as a step towards the ending of the arms race or as a portent of a more open world. It is now negotiable because the super-powers have recently conducted such an extensive series of tests that they have the technical data they need for many years to come; and also because computer techniques are rendering tests less necessary to weapon development; and, because scientific advances in detection methods have made it possible to monitor tests without more than formal inspection of the country concerned.

IT IS TOO EARLY to pass final judgment on the value of a Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, but it has already taught us several important lessons about arms control negotiations and agreements. The first is that the object of the negotiations must be clearly recognised. Both sides went into this one with muddled motives which were never properly communicated or reconciled. If, for instance, their real object was to arrest each other's progress, then the test ban was an unnecessarily oblique way of approaching the subject: they should have been talking in great privacy about the fundamental security requirements of each side. If their main object was to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons to other countries, then the test ban was an insufficient instrument and should have been coupled with an agreed approach to safeguards on the transfer of fissile material to other countries for peaceful purposes, and a cut-off on the production of their own military material.

The second lesson may be that there is not, in practice, very much difference between a formal treaty and an informal understanding between the super-powers. For one thing, such agreements between the super-powers are not enforceable, by reasons of their own strength, by any international machinery or tribunal. The opinion of the rest of the world matters to them both (especially to the United States), but is not

[2] *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (September, 1962).

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crucial. The only sanction against the infringement of such agreements is the fear that the other man will take similar action, and therefore the only importance of casting them in treaty form, rather than achieving private understandings between Moscow and Washington, is that they may last somewhat longer if publicly signed on stiff paper and covered with sealing wax. For another, it is by no means certain that the other potential nuclear powers, notably France and China, would adhere to a Soviet-American-British agreement, and if they do not there is not much the super-powers can do about it.

This is my principal point of disagreement with John Strachey when he suggests in his brilliant recent book that great power agreements can be enforced upon the lesser powers.[3] I fear that the same factors which deter the United States and the Soviet Union from using nuclear weapons against each other would render impotent their vast military and political power in the face of the opposition of third parties. It is hard to believe, for instance, that the use of nuclear weapons could credibly be threatened to bring smaller countries into line on an arms control agreement. Indeed, any suggestion of a Soviet-American condominium might well lay the foundations of an ultimate Chinese-European alliance.

But the beneficent result of a negotiation like the test ban is to stimulate research into the means by which the two sides can unilaterally acquire greater control over each others' actions. For instance, seismology was the poor sister of the physical sciences when the test ban negotiations started. It is now a flourishing art whose advances have strengthened the security of both sides, even in default of formal agreement, by making it possible to tell more accurately what is going on in each other's countries. The search for multilateral solutions may make unilateral measures more feasible.

ANOTHER CRUCIAL AREA of multilateral negotiation where we may have the same experience concerns the non-militarisation of space. Neither of the two super-powers wishes to put weapons of mass destruction in space (despite the rumblings of Marshal Malinovsky), for they have a sound instinct that this might bring about the collapse of organised relations between the two blocs even if it did not lead to war. Again, the attempt to reach formal agreement (with the high degree of ground inspection of launching sites involved) may not succeed. But in the process of arguing, they may so stimulate development of the photographic or telemetric reconnaissance satellite as an alternative to ground inspection, as formidably to increase each other's capacity to monitor the other's military dispositions as well as his space preparations. It is a mistake to think that this would be a one-way street in favour of the Americans or ourselves. Having discussed problems of international security with Russians over a period of years, I am convinced their very real sense of apprehension about Western intentions springs not only from a failure to understand the context and tenor of Western debates, but also from a very partial and inaccurate appreciation of our strength. Technical espionage at which the Russians are most industrious is one thing; sound political and military judgment based on a comprehensive understanding of the adversary's capabilities and limitations is quite another.

THE NEXT KIND OF limited agreement which may hold out promise concerns the reduction or exclusion of armaments in certain geographic areas. Here no general principles apply. The exclusion of nuclear weapons from the land of Africa should, for instance, be relatively easy to negotiate since Africa has lost its old strategic importance—though none of its political importance—for the great powers. The same is true of Latin America. In both these areas the struggle, in Mr. Khrushchev's words, "is to be continued by other means." In Asia it is much more difficult for the time being, partly because of the uncertainty about Chinese capabilities and intentions, partly because of the lack of any indigenous system of collective security to unite the stronger countries of Southern Asia with the weaker—of which even the foundations are not yet laid. However, the fact that the main weight of the American strategic deterrent is being now concentrated in North America and its adjacent seas, coupled with the fact that the Soviet Union is rapidly becoming a major naval power, provides a mutual incentive, especially after the shock of Cuba, to negotiate some understanding —which has already found some expression in the dismantling of the American missile bases in Britain, Italy, and Turkey—by which the two major powers agree to limit their bases overseas.

In Europe the problem is entirely different. There, a very high level of force exists already,

[3] *On the Prevention of War* (Macmillan, 1962).

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and the super-powers are by no means the only parties to any settlement that would reduce it. The older ideas of arms control in Europe (such as "disengagement") have been killed by the rise of the European Community and the enfolding of Western Germany within it. Such projects as the Rapacki Plan for a de-nuclearised zone in the middle of Europe[4] have been overtaken by events, since the security neither of Europe nor the rest of the hemisphere will be enhanced by creating such an artificial region when there are weapons with ranges that enable them to be fired both over and into it. The strengthening of the security of Europe is going to be a long and difficult task, inseparable in most aspects from the strengthening of international security as a whole. However, in discussions that my own Institute has been conducting this year with our French and German opposite numbers, we have found that a fairly simple system of inspection in East and West Europe could provide both sides with a good degree of security against pre-emptive or surprise attack, as well as against the danger of misinterpreting the adversary's military movements. The possibilities of a reduction of major armaments in Europe may be more seriously examined as the main burden of maintaining the European balance of power becomes relatively more onerous in terms of man-power and expenditure to both sides, as the strategic stalemate increases the dangers of local trouble, and as the hopes of using the forces on either side of the wall for an effective diplomatic purpose recede further into the distance.

FINALLY, THERE IS ONE FIELD for multilateral agreement which has been neglected—namely, communications. In times of tension, such as we witnessed over Cuba, the speed of diplomatic action and reaction is now so rapid that any failure of communications could lead to dire and unintended results. On the morning of October 28th, President Kennedy, dissatisfied with the negative tone of Mr. Khrushchev's earlier communications, was contemplating the necessity of having to take military action against the Cuban mainland. If there had been an electrical storm or some mechanical failure which had impeded Mr. Khrushchev's final messages, as just such a failure had blacked out one of the main American diplomatic relay stations a few days earlier, the Cuban affair, and with it world history, might have taken a different turn. The world can no longer afford to live without absolutely secure communications (probably involving the use of satellites), not just for command purposes but also for diplomatic purposes, between the major capitals, and between the heads of great military systems like the NATO Supreme Commander and the Commander of the Warsaw Pact. This is but elementary prudence to offset the narrow time margins that technical progress has imposed upon diplomacy.[5]

The Ungrand Design

BY CONTRAST with the golden prospect of a world permanently disarmed, are these anything more than peripheral measures? If it is the prevention of war that primarily concerns us, the precautions that minimise its danger and create a more confident attitude between the two super-powers are of high importance. But they do not exhaust the kinds of precaution that can be taken, for unilateral action has always played as large a part in the reduction of international tension as any negotiated agreement.

The range of actions which are within our own power to initiate is a narrow one, for they must meet two needs: they must neither foolishly jeopardise such security as we enjoy at present; and they must be of a kind whose real meaning will still be discernible to the other side, through the distorting lens of an ideological conflict that has now been going on for many years. Some of the actions that are most noisily mooted, for instance the unilateral abandonment of the British nuclear force, would merely serve to cleanse the consciences of those who make louder protestations than most about the horror of nuclear weapons which we all feel. To think that it would have a decisive effect upon the course of events is to make the same kind of error about the decisiveness of Britain's weight in international affairs as those who, until a few years ago, imagined that Britain could unilaterally use force of arms to maintain her position in Africa or the Middle East.

Undoubtedly the most significant unilateral act of restraint that lies within our power to consider at the moment is for the United States to modify her present determination to build up

[4] Adam Rapacki, "The Polish Plan for a Nuclear-Free Zone To-day," in *International Affairs* (January, 1963).

[5] This danger has now been recognised and rectified in the agreement on a White House-Kremlin "hot line," signed at Geneva on June 20.

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a very large strategic force by 1965 of some 3,000 units of strategic delivery—bombs and air-, sea-, or ground-launched missiles capable of striking the Communist powers—and to base her deterrent upon a much smaller force of invulnerable weapons. Against a force of the size of which Russia now disposes such invulnerability can, at present, be achieved. If the United States were to decide that to deter the use of some 800 Soviet long- and medium-range missiles directed at herself and Europe, she could be satisfied with say some 400 Minuteman missiles in very "hard" sites and 20 Polaris submarines—half the force planned—scrapping all the older bombers and missiles, then something like parity in the major armaments of the super-powers might be achieved. Any Soviet attempt to attain strategic superiority herself could now be fairly rapidly thwarted by re-starting the American production lines. If such agreement—no matter how informal—could be reached, the mutual means of monitoring it are becoming available.

If it be the case that the technological arms race is one of the prime causes of international insecurity to-day, this conscious decision to abandon the search for strategic superiority, in favour of a secure second-strike position, might, when reinforced by a test ban and an agreement on outer space, be the first step towards diverting the competition between the two blocs into less dangerous channels. For one of our overriding concerns should be to foster a climate of international relations in which military research becomes directed more towards means of monitoring than towards means of destruction.

ONE MAY ARGUE that this would be a rash step. One can rehearse the conventional arguments why the United States as the heart of the maritime coalition requires a superiority in major nuclear armaments to protect the free world. One can argue that modern strategy admits no concept of parity, since the deterrent capability of the country is related to complex technical considerations about penetration, invulnerability, lethality rather than to numbers of delivery units. One can argue that this would loosen the American leadership of the Western alliances at a time when certain other disruptive forces are at work.[6] But a quantitative nuclear superiority may become less meaningful in terms of the protection of allies as the Russians themselves make their missiles less vulnerable. It is American naval superiority not nuclear superiority that has counted for most in the real crises of the past decade from Korea to Cuba. Though parity may be dubious concept in terms of modern military strategy, it is politically intelligible and its meaning can be communicated to the other side. Moreover, theoretical work in this field has shown that where numbers are equal, the defender gains the upper hand in a strategic nuclear exchange if his forces are relatively invulnerable. If the United States neglects an opportunity, for fear of losing her hegemony in her own sphere, of communicating to the Russians that there are certain advantages she will unilaterally forgo in return for certain unilateral Soviet restraints, then a better opportunity may not recur, for at the moment much of Soviet diplomacy is in ruins, and her arms programme is bearing very heavily upon her economy.

Or one may argue that this is much too cautious a step and that the United States could well afford more radical action, to have, say, no more than 10 or 100 truly invulnerable weapons targeted on Soviet cities. It is true that there have of late been striking advances in the techniques of rendering weapons invulnerable, but there are many pitfalls in the advocacy of a sweeping reduction in strategic forces as a first step. Invulnerability is still relative to numbers and could be pierced by new technological advances. A deterrent force targeted purely on cities would, apart from the moral implications, leave no flexibility of action in unforeseen crises.

Would the Soviet Union respect such restraint or try to take advantage of it? Is Soviet policy capable of developing any concept of international stability, or merely a respect for strength and the status quo? The answer is not clear yet: one important indication will be whether she goes on augmenting her strong missile threat to Western Europe.

Above all, the United States, and all of us, would need firm assurance that a reduction in the planned level of her strategic striking power, and her somewhat lessened ability to protect her allies in the event of deterrence failing, would not lead to a policy of *sauve qui peut* and the acceleration of small independent nuclear forces in Europe and among the major neutrals. If it were to lead to this, our security would in no way have been enhanced. Both the United

[6] This is certainly one of the strongest motives for the official policy of the Kennedy Administration, as Mr. Macnamara's famous Ann Arbor Speech of June 1962, emphasised.

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States and the Soviet Union must know the answer to many questions before they could move beyond tacit gestures to informal agreements on the stabilisation of nuclear armaments, and thence to formal agreements on their reduction.

THE ALLIES of the United States have therefore to consider carefully the implications of stabilising the major arms race, for they would be profoundly affected. It would require not only similar self-restraint on the part of the small nuclear powers such as Britain and France; it would require a strengthened system of central planning and command within the Atlantic alliance, so that what loss of confidence in the physical power of the United States there might be, would be compensated by much closer influence upon the planning which governed the use of her still enormous power. A better system for the co-ordination of policy within the maritime coalition is thus a condition of the stabilisation of major armaments. Moreover, it would require greatly increased concentration upon the quality, efficiency, morale, and mobility (rather than the size) of our conventional forces, if—in a world still full of unresolved tensions—we are to push nuclear weapons further into the background. The non-nuclear power of the maritime coalition is already enormous—8,000,000 men under arms—the essential thing is to get better value out of it.

ONE OTHER INITIATIVE, quite different in scale but nearly equal in importance, rests within our power. Part of our dilemma lies, as I have suggested, in the fact that these revolutions in destructive and propulsive power have occurred simultaneously with an era of extreme nationalism in every continent save Europe. Inevitably, the years ahead will witness armed clashes between new states in the other continents—or the collapse of civil order, as they struggle with the problems of creating coherent political entities out of the lands from which the colonial powers have withdrawn. In such situations the intervention of the Western powers is unlikely to be requested. If it were, it might very well justify a Soviet decision to fish in troubled waters, especially since she now has competitive diplomacy with China in the uncommitted world. We know the dangers of any direct confrontation between the larger powers of the two blocs: we know how great a setback to a more confident world another débâcle like the Congo, in Angola or Somaliland, or the Middle East, would be.

In this situation, in which the ability of the great powers to act as the guardians of the peace is now so limited, we neglect at our peril the encouragement of a stronger capacity for swift and effective police action on the part of the United Nations. It is true that the United Nations has been prevented from fulfilling its central task of maintaining the security of all the powers, great and small. We know how limited a part it can play in the areas where the Cold War has laid its icy grip, in Europe, in South-East Asia, or the Far East. But this new role of helping to prevent war or internal anarchy, in the great areas that lie outside the Cold War arena, is itself of great importance to our own security. It is a vital Western interest to ensure that the United Nations has the finance, the material backing, and the call on our experience, in order that it can keep the peace in the uncommitted and turbulent areas of Africa and the Middle East.[7] Equally it is our vital interest to assist, by self-restraint upon our commercial instincts, in preventing the development of local arms races there between young countries who unfortunately have learnt from us to look upon weapons as a "status symbol." This is a different and much more modest goal than trying to create a monopoly of force under the United Nations; but it cannot be achieved without substantial backing from at least the major Western powers.

THERE IS, AT PRESENT, NO FOUNDATION upon which we can ground an orderly structure of international security. There is no concert of the Powers, and we have no substitute for a balance of power whose equilibrium depends upon the conscious restraint of two states, of a size and weight never before known, who share only a fragmentary common language. That they can expand their common alphabet, we have now good reason to hope. But we indulge in *hybris* if we think we, the older European powers who were the guardians of international security in an earlier age, can teach them it, for its syntax derives from the possession of awful means of destruction of which we ourselves have only partial knowledge. These two super-powers now face a very difficult moment when the process

[7] Peter Calvocoressi has explored the problem with characteristic clarity in *World Order and New States* (Chatto & Windus).

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of drawing closer together, of achieving limited measures of agreement and *détente* to stabilise the dangers of the nuclear arms race, implies the risk of losing control of the two great blocs of which they are the leaders, and thus exposing themselves and the world to new risks. The West could, if it chose, help to ease this transitional period for the Soviet Union by permitting China to become part of the international community. Whether Western opinion, as a whole, can be brought to see the intimate connection between this and stabilising of the nuclear balance of power, is, unfortunately, another matter. What we can certainly do is to develop further the pragmatic instruments of Atlantic co-operation which we have evolved, so that the United States is not deterred from talking to the Soviet Union by any fear that Europe might become "the China of the West."

OURS IS A GENERATION to whose lot has fallen the unheroic, but not unstimulating, task of bridging a period of transition. Neither the unilateral search for security nor the multilateral alone meets our purpose. We neglect the special value of the United Nations at our cost, but we cannot put all our weight upon it. We must recognise the military dominance of to-day's two super-powers—we cannot expect that they alone can create a world order.

Only an intelligent co-ordination of a number of quite limited instruments is adequate to the diversity of threats which a world of overlapping revolutions has created.

Somewhere nearer the end of this troubled century, when to-day's forward surge of scientific advance has found its natural limits, when the gap between the richer and the poorer nations has been lessened, when to-day's anarchy of sovereign states has perhaps found its natural corrective in a series of regional systems, a more structured system of world security may emerge. If we can sketch the designs and explore the foundations now, above all keep the temporary roof—a balance of power based on nuclear deterrence—from falling in, then our successors may be able to start the great work of construction.

The Runner

She ran to him
from the ticket barrier
saying,
in her language, Are you angry,

are you angry?
In her blue coat and white
lambswool cap-
comforter, cheeks flushed by the

snow, she ran to
him. And may she run,
eventually, just
as late, with just that question,

to the one who
cannot help gathering her
either
from the thin night crowd.

Christopher Middleton

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Robert Oppenheimer

The Added Cubit

A Talk in New York

A LITTLE MORE than a year ago, Federov, then Scientific Secretary of the Soviet Academy of Science, was at the United Nations. He let it be known that he would like to come to Princeton to meet me and to visit the Institute of Advanced Studies. The day before his visit I suggested that we have a few people to lunch with him who would be interested in meeting him and talking with him. He came very early in the morning, and there was much time for us to talk. Federov had been a geophysicist, whose most famous act was to accompany an ice floe on a very long and hazardous journey. But he himself was no longer very interested or active in scientific things. His life was that of a politician and a manager of the Academy, which has been a power in Russia. When we had agreed, as we early did, that science was a good thing, and that peace was a good thing, the conversation lagged. I asked him then how he envisaged the future, say fifty years off.

"We know how rapidly our work in the sciences is growing. I know that you have five-year plans and ten-year projections. What do you think? What will it really be like fifty years from now?"

And without hesitation, Federov said, "Everyone will be a scientist." These words died rather slowly in the room. "No," he said, "I did not say that quite right. Machines will do all the labour, and everyone will be engaged in creative work." Again there was some silence. Then he said, "Of course, there will always be people who are interested in sport."

It will be clear to you that Federov's trouble was that he did not have the great advantage we Americans enjoy: he did not have available the reports of a Presidential Commission on "National Goals."

THERE HAS BEEN much thought taken in the last centuries; it has certainly added many cubits to the extent and dimensions of the problems with which we are living. I shall not repeat to you the catalogue of indicia that attest this growth: the 93 per cent of all the men of science in human history who are alive to-day; the periodicals which, if they continue to grow as they have, will outweigh the world in the next century; the vast ramification of specialised techniques and the feedback of technology and invention and technological discovery and prowess to make new tools for the study of nature and, in some of his aspects, for the study of man. I do want to remind you of two things that are said, but less often said. One is that the study of history has also deepened, ramified, and expanded. The history of art, the history of the sciences, the history of China and of India are enterprises which are new and characteristic of our time, and, even more, of our future. We know more of the human past, and are better able to correct our reading of its meaning than has ever been possible before. Only to-day, for instance, is a critical edition of Newton's *Principia* on its way, not

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yet in the hands of the printer, which will make generally available to us the many variant readings that reflect Newton's philosophical doubts and his growing maturity. I look to these studies of history to provide new links in the unity of knowledge, to bring man's understanding of his world into closer connection.

The unity of knowledge, long thought of as corresponding to a structure in which the foundation stones imply the whole, has today a very different topology: very much more than a temple, it is a network, as William James foresaw, with no central chamber, no basic truths from which all else will follow, but with a wonderful mutual relevance between its many branches, and with beauty illuminating the growing tips of knowledge, even in the most recondite and unfamiliar branches. As far as learning goes, as far as the cognitive world that is for many of us a large part of man's world, this means that what we have often said, we must now mean and intend and practise. Learning is not alone for the child and the youth. For the professional it has always been a lifelong vocation; and if our world is to cohere, if we are to be able to talk with one another about our common problems, about the meaning of our lives, more and more we shall need, whatever our professional duty, to learn a little of what is being found out about the world of nature, and about man and about his history: to learn by talk, by reading, by study. "National Book Committees" have much to do.

THESE THOUGHTS, which have often been spoken by others and by me, are not the centre of what I would say to-day. This centre lies in some of the problems which the growth of knowledge, and the growth of power based on that knowledge, have put before us; and with two traits of the European tradition which seems to me helpful, more than helpful, deeply needed in living with them. The first is our sense of responsibility to human history, to its present and its future. This is not a trait of the great culture of China, nor of that of India; but it is to be found in the Old Testament and in the New, and it seems characteristic of European culture and of Christianity for the last millennium. I cannot help seeing with a certain awe the power of this as one part of the Christian sensibility when it touches lands with ancient but quite other traditions, and even lands with very primitive cultures; and in this I see one element of hope that a world unified by technology and in danger of tearing itself to shreds in minutes may yet have some human basis for a united world.

Indeed the responsibility for history is probably a decisive reason for the growth of that intimate working together, that symbiosis of technology, experiment, study, analysis, synthesis which is the modern world of science. Scholars have asked why no such history was made in China, or in India, or even more pointedly, in the Mediterranean world of antiquity. Einstein thought that perhaps the reason was that none of these cultures had had a sufficiently developed tradition both in the algebraic and in the geometric views of nature. Others have suggested that because of slavery or peonage or a too rigid caste system there was no adequate regard or affection for the work of the hand, for technique and the arts; but many serious scholars, and I as an observer, fail to find in these an adequate reason. I believe that the idea of the improvement of human life on earth provided the air for the great fires of science.

IN HER OWN DAY, which is partly ours, Simone Weil wrote of this time that in comparison with all earlier times it was rich in illusory responsibilities, and very poor in real ones; and she added that an understanding of this brought a sweet serenity. She is, of course, largely right, not only of all of us, but even, perhaps to his astonishment, of the President of the United States, and, perhaps even to his greater astonishment, of the President of France. What this can mean to a writer of novels has been most movingly sketched by Mary McCarthy in her essay on *Fact in Fiction*. It is true, but it is by no

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means equally true, of the two massive problems which science has brought before the world: the world-wide need for social justice, and the maintenance, the extension, the existence of peace. That these two are related most people believe; that effort and responsibility for one should absolve, should relieve us of the other seems to me impossible.

We live to-day in the United States with the bitter heritage of centuries of slavery. We live in a world in which foreign oppression has only recently been lifted in some continents, and still prevails in others. We live in a world where hunger, illness, ignorance persist although the resources to reduce them are abundantly at hand. The last years have increasingly seen devoted efforts to these causes, misguided surely in many ways, self-centred and self-congratulatory where they should be modest, global in generality, and often not responsive, not adequately responsive, to the men and women, and indeed the children, whose hearts and spirits must make their own new world. But to me it seems that we are slowly learning what we can and what we ought not do, and in this we have a very widely shared possibility, a very widely shared responsibility open to us. Let us learn fast.

BUT WITH THE QUESTION of war, the situation is quite other; none of these words may be spoken. I cannot regard it as an acceptable evil that we, and clearly our adversaries, prepare to inflict such unprecedented and very nearly unimaginable harm on the people of this world as we now do with our weapons, our weapons systems, and our war plans. I know, and I rather gratefully and somewhat proudly know, that neither our Government nor any meaningful part of our people plans to do this harm "one fine day" without cause. I think it true that the Soviet Government concludes that it would not be wise to take such a course. It is my earnest hope that when the time comes, as one day it will, when China has a comparable power, its Government and its people will have learned not to use that power; but here, of course, my hope is nourished by nothing. Like you, I would like to know a little whereof I speak. Yet I cannot believe that it is without profound corruption and a profound alienation that our culture, our peace, and our lives rest on such an inferno, nor that we can go unscathed, even in matters of learned study or high art, or in the nobility of our converse with one another, by the dark foundation which underlies this perilous tranquillity of ours.

This leads me to the other trait of European society which seems to me rather missing in our secularised age, the trait that can be found in other great religions, in Buddhism surely, in the Buddha himself, but which is a constant word in what underlies the European and the Christian sensibility, in the Stoa, in Ecclesiastes, in the Gospels. It is a truth whose recognition seems to me essential to the very possibility of a permanently peaceful world, and to be indispensable also in our dealings with people with radically different history and culture and tradition. It is the knowledge of the inwardness of evil, and an awareness that in our dealings with this we are very close to the centre of life. It is true of us as a people that we tend to see all devils as foreigners; it is true of us ourselves, most of us, who are not artists, that in our public life, and to a distressing extent our private life as well, we reflect and project and externalise what we cannot bear to see within us. When we are blind to the evil in ourselves, we dehumanise ourselves, and we deprive ourselves not only of our own destiny, but of any possibility of dealing with the evil in others. Perhaps we are most in debt to Freud for seeing the evil in man as a part of nature, and for treating it without contempt or hatred. Yet we, as a part of nature, are not without responsibility for what we make of nature. To-day, in a secular world, it is almost wholly through the arts that we have a living reminder of the terror, of the nobility of what we can be, and what we are.

WHEN St. Matthew said, "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his

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stature?" he expected no reply. We too cannot reply. By taking thought of our often grim responsibility, by knowing something of our profound and omnipresent imperfection, we may help our children's children to a world less cruel, perhaps less unjust, less likely to end in catastrophe beyond words. We may even find our way to put an end to the orgy, the killing, the brutality that is war.

Let me end with an anecdote. Three weeks ago a high officer of the National Book Committee asked me for a title for this talk. I did not have one then, but I promised to call back shortly, and gave the title that you have heard. He protested that my title was quite puzzling and uninformative. I said that it had a history, and when the officer asked, I quoted St. Matthew. Then he said, "From what book is that?" Readers and writers still have a lot to do.

Easter Poem

for John Cotton

I had gone on Easter Day
early and alone to be
beyond insidious bells
(that any other Sunday
I'd not hear) up to the hills
where are winds to blow away

commination. In the frail
first light I saw him, unreal
and sudden through lifting mist,
a fox on a barn door, nailed
like a coloured plaster Christ
in a Spanish shrine, his tail

coiled around his loins. Sideways
his head hung limply, his ears
snagged with burdock, his dry nose
plugged with black blood. For two days
he'd held the orthodox pose.
The endemic English noise

of Easter Sunday morning
was mixed with the mist swirling
and might have moved his stiff head.
Under the hill the ringing
had begun. As the sun rose red
to press on seemed the best thing.

I walked the length of the day's
obsession. At dusk I was
swallowed by the misted barn,
sucked by the peristalsis
of my fear that he had gone,
leaving nails for souvenirs.

But he was there still. I saw
no sign. He hung as before.
Only the wind had risen
to comb the thorns from his fur.
I left my superstition
stretched on the banging barn door.

Ted Walker

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Margaret Shedd

The Everlasting Witness

THEY THREE were eating breakfast on the terrace, a thousand and one felicitous birds singing in the garden trees. The coffee was exactly right, poured from its American electric percolator. And the roses bloomed serenely against the pink Mexican wall, each bush in an unsullied damp brown circle of soft earth. Marian's brother-in-law read the English page, as dedicated as a nice little boy reading the funnies, and Theresa, Marian's sister, chatted softly and merrily about their next Cuernevaca week-end. Theresa's bright smile had always been her mark and now, childless and with a husband beyond war age, and a life both ordered and gay, it looked as if that smile had justified itself.

Marian opened her mouth to tell them what she had done the night before and then she closed it on brioche, no words. What she had done was to try and find the film again, the war news-reel in which she had seen Jerry, her son. Or had she seen him? That was just it, and they ought to be told that the uncertainty had not been removed by this trip to Mexico. If she could explain the plain necessity to them maybe they would help her. But her next and clearer thought, untouched by security of terrace, food, and birds, was that this matter was all her own and had to be accomplished without help. Evidence of that was that her husband had let her come down alone; the trip to Mexico was for her to find herself, get back on her feet, return to him healed.

Well, she had not expected to look for the film, had not even known she could look with only her smattering of Spanish. But the night before—the first time her sister and brother-in-law had left her alone—she had gone to the dictionary and got the two words *cine* and *guerra*, *movie* and *war*, and combining them with a question mark had asked them over and over on the phone, going down the movie houses in the yellow section of the book. After a while she found out the word she wanted was not *cine* but *noticias*, *news-reel* (at one of the box offices a golden Mexican voice told her that in perfect English); so she had had to call the first part of the list over again. Now she knew, whether correctly or not, that three places had news-reels about the war. Probably she had missed some but she was going to start with these. She had not been able to understand the showing times so she would have to go to the theatre and sit through whatever came. Probably she could only manage one in a day because of Theresa's persistence in helping her towards equanimity; it was doubtful whether more than a few hours' absence would be possible.

The Olimpia, the del Prado, and the Cine Mexico. She had found out exactly where each one was on the map in her red guide-book. For that matter she could get into a taxi and say the name of the theatre but she thought she would rather drive herself and keep the whole event within her own control. Maybe this was why she had brought her car to Mexico. Her husband had wanted her to fly and she had said no, obstinately and without being able to explain. And he (who was Jerry's stepfather and therefore involved multifoldly in her suffering, not singly as a real father would have been) gently and with no demur accepted her

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decision and drove her as far as Memphis. But although they didn't talk about it, she knew he never would have let her go away from him except that her sister was in Mexico, and also because he was pretty sure she wouldn't be able to see the film again there. But that part of it had not worked because she hadn't been able to let it work.

FIVE MONTHS AGO she had received notification that Jerry was missing in action. Twenty-and-a-half years old. His father had died early in the other war. Jerry was seven then and she had had to manage him alone, had sometimes failed him, sometimes been burdened too greatly, but she had always loved him. Maybe that had not been enough. She had married again when he was seventeen but this had not given him a retroactive father for the twelve-thirteen-fourteen-year-old times of crisis. So he was not ready for the army when he had to go. He had been mixed up and scared. And in six months he was missing in action.

She could hardly remember now what happened to her right after the notification. Nightmare rides of balking misery which clattered over wide fields and hills of the rubbled dying. She was looking for him, finding his hand with his father's ring on the little finger, holding the hand to give it warmth, reaching to the wrist; and then the sweat of terror which brought her back to what she supposed must be reality. If this happened at night, her husband was there and his arms came around her, his hand on the side of her head, holding her to his shoulder. But that was also when she reached the ebb of pain because she had comfort and Jerry, wherever he was, had none.

It was like that until she saw the picture the first time. They went to the movies fairly often. Her husband always knew what they were going to see, asked the times carefully, got to the main picture and avoided news-reels. She had hardly noticed this and did not want to. But once two indolent people in the seats next to theirs delayed them, and the news-reel started. From the beginning it was about the war.

She sat down again. Her hands were tight together in her lap. Her husband was lost to her. She was alone. They were showing the finest new weapons, grand, shining, and built perfectly for death. Whoever summoned and made palpable all that force and skill knew death was best and would be earless to the little voice of mothers whose sons were their children before they got to be targets or heroes. Her hands and her neck began to sweat. But she knew that no emotion was really pertinent.

And then some soldier boys came on the screen. They were prisoners of war. Someone had got a chance to take their pictures at a prison-compound gate. The way the picture was taken it looked as though they were outside. They were thin, young, sick American soldiers moving bemused. She said to herself they don't want to look right at the camera; they are angry or ashamed or both and their guards are saying to them, albeit in a different language, "Smile now so your mother can see you." So they will not smile. Why should they? Who took the picture, she was asking herself, was it an American who got permission or one of their own? Or maybe the boys didn't know the picture was being taken. They lolled listlessly against a gate frame and a plank wall. The narrator voice was full of professional pity but it gave no information.

She felt her blood pricking along her temples; now it was pounding, and there was pressure in her chest below the hollow. Jerry could be there. So strong a hope must play delaying games. He was not there.

He was there. One boy stood with his back to the camera, leaning stooped against a gate lintel, and on the finger of the hand that held the post there was a ring she recognised. There wouldn't be another like it. She had had it made for Jerry's father. The boy with his back to the camera began to straighten up; he was turning. But the picture was over.

THE NEXT was a roller-skating race. The tailored voice left behind it the sentiment

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siphoned in for the boys and went with gusto into a wild chant about sports. She got out of the seat still unconscious of her husband, excused herself politely to the people who had held them up, and went to the ladies' room where she vomited and then, immediately, in a renewal of energy, was full of plans.

Her husband went with her three times to see the film, and after that asked her to promise not to go any more. She made the promise but she could not keep it. The first time she saw the picture alone she was sure there was more action, only a flicking motion, but more. That was hope and she had to feed it.

Her husband made inquiries. The War Department answered that they had no record of Jerry in a prison camp. Of course the enemy's reports on prisoners of war were not necessarily accurate. And they said they knew about the film. It was taken by American photographers who had been given permission because somehow the enemy thought it was good propaganda, but they had been forced to shoot from the outside of the gate only what they could catch that way and in a few minutes. The man who wrote said kindly and gently that as far as he had been able to find out nothing had been cut from the film.

But she was sure there was more. She followed the film to every booking in town, second run, in the suburbs, in the drive-ins. Sometimes she stayed afterwards to see the roller-skating queens, Miss Hoboken and Miss Los Angeles. Sometimes she came out quickly, blinking in the light, leaving her boys behind her in the dark. It made her think they were safe there. That was not altogether the point but it was maybe three-quarters of it: that if she saw the picture it meant they were there (and Jerry) not dead on some chewed-up hill. She knew them all now and they were Jerry's friends. She thought they too were talking to him, "Why don't you turn around, kid? We ain't going to play up to this and grin from ear to ear to make out we're well off, but you better at least turn around. Your mother might be glad to see you." He was obstinate as he always had been, and a little slow, but he had been getting ready to turn. No, she was sure he had turned.

THAT WAS the way it was. It had got so that even if she knew the time was past to find it any more, she kept looking and looking as if she had transferred the nightmare battlefield search into this other kind and as if she might have to go back to the first if she stopped this.

And how could she have imagined that Mexico would be any different? The Olimpia, the del Prado, and the Cine Mexico. None of them first run so it was possible. She wanted to ask her brother-in-law behind his newspaper what they did to Americans newsreels here, cut them more? But the risk was too much. They might lie to her or in some other way keep her from going.

When she had arrived a fortnight before she had asked her sister to give her a duty in the house. So Theresa had given her the flowers to arrange. The house was not far from the Dolores market, half a big traffic circle of pure flowers. Marian had gone there every few days. Up to now Theresa had gone with her, or dropped her and picked her up. She told them to-day she would go in her own car.

"Are you sure you know the way, Marian?"

"Of course, across the park and around that museum the opposite way from the one that looks right, and then the turn and out the gate. I know it perfectly." Her voice sounded sensible and secure.

But she had dallied, first on the terrace and then on the way across the park. This was the day. But what day?

When she had spent the eighty-four hours alone—from the morning she left her husband in Memphis to the evening she met Theresa, who had flown to Monterrey to ride into Mexico with her—she had kept hoping at first that the long flat way would be a highway out of confusion, levelling it, thinning it down to understanding, as if the moving air would whip through the car and dissolve the granulated mass of un-

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answered worries. She wanted one firm answer: yes, they have a right to take him, no matter what; yes, the clatter and chatter of arms and the frail tremor of boys' fear, lost in a bunker or a new shrapnel-proof vest or wherever however, is a combination of sounds in some way acceptable to a mother. How? But the only thing she discovered on that ride was that there is no firm answer. Some place near Corpus Christi, Texas, she found out that the haze of grey questions was not going to lift.

When Jerry's father had died it was precise: a ring sent back to her; an event reported; sad notes on a sliding trumpet which said that pink gingham, rosebud, golden night love was gone. It broke her heart. After a while that mended in its own way. So if now she could only have taken her heart in her two hands to break it in a jagged line a little to one side of the middle —but she could not find that relief. Was it different for mothers than for wives, this stream of grief muddied by the clay that children are made of? There was no answer for a mother; that was all she found out on the long ride.

And she summed it up now on the short ride across the park to the flower market. She did this rather slowly, driving slowly too. But then she pulled her car to a curb, because it came to her (like another trumpet call, like a call to duty?) that there was indeed an answer, and that this was why she had followed the movie treadmill around and around. The trouble was that she had never been willing to accept the clear issue of death or life.

AND NOW, stopped by the road in the park, she decided categorically, hitting the back of one hand into the palm of the other over and over, that if she found him, found the picture here and now, maybe even that very day (unreasonably unquestioning that she would see it) then she would know he was alive and she would simply make waiting womanly and rational. And if she did not see it in the del Prado, Olimpia, or Cine Mexico then she would say he was dead. Because war is death or life. The line must be drawn, and if it was on death's side then her heart would have to break and she would have to go on, go back to life, get back to her husband who was waiting for her patiently and with love. It was a decision. The uncertainty was at last behind her.

At the flower market she walked up and down in front of the stalls, and she saw more clearly because of her decision, so she thought. First she looked at the flowers: pansies, purple iris, marigolds, and sweet peas—amplitude—some that were like feathers, fluffy and silent, and some like banners, and all marshalled by skilful hands. Behind everything the backdrop of gladioli which because of their colours could be forgiven their pretensions.

Then she looked at the people. There was a family at the farthest stand. She had just found fresh violets there, and the gladioli were less blatant and unshriven probably because it was a poor stand and a poor family that could not afford the finest and tallest of anything. The woman's face was sad. She was sick. But her hands were beautiful. She was nursing a baby.

Marian wanted no grand flowers, only the soft and touchable. She browsed to other stands and pansies and peonies. She bought a big wheel of red carnations, and some little white gentle-petalled primroses with shiny dark green leaves. She was loaded down beyond the vases or even the places for flowers in her sister's house. She turned away at last and ran head on into the man who opened car doors (but he had missed hers when she parked) and who was now tottering out to the curb for someone else.

HE HAD A SHAKING SICKNESS and his face looked old and bloated under the tremors and jerking muscles. Theresa never seemed to mind him and always gave him two pesos, for nothing, because he shook too much to carry flowers or really even to open car doors. But he was always there, and now Marian, on her own, sincerely hated him. The disgust and horror of him she had suppressed on other visits welled up unchecked.

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He seemed to recognise her although he looked all of an idiot. He came back from the curb to her and when she veered away from him he puttered back to her car which was parked in front of the farthest stand, the one belonging to the family with the sick mother. He fumbled for her car door.

"No," she said sharply, and shuddered because she could not stand the touch of his hand on her door.

The nursing mother looked up. There was no disapproval in her face but she called to the idiot, "Ven, ven, Pepito."

Marian felt ashamed, only because the other woman had seen her disgust, but she could not have controlled that anyway. Then she turned back, not knowing exactly why—telling herself that it was because to carry that load of flowers and leave them in a parked car for possibly some hours, was an absurdity. Standing in front of the flower-stand woman she knew she would not have to explain that she wanted to leave them.

The other said, "Si, señora, si," and with lovely gestures asked her husband to take the flowers and put them in the shade behind the stand. The idiot meantime stood to one side awkwardly, and unpleasantly chewed a piece of cocoanut he had picked up in the gutter.

So now she was going to the del Prado. Now she could go, whatever was that necessity for buying flowers, taken care of. She banged her car door and the idiot made a tremor more marked than the ordinary but the nursing woman looked up from the baby and smiled.

Down town, she had to park her car in a garage. She would have liked not to go through the grind, clatter, jitter of the narrow entryway into the garage. She needed a little quiet. Everything was getting ready for this moment. She did not carry the flowers in her car but she carried them in her heart. Now she was going to find out whether it was death or life. Either she could tolerate. Again it did not occur to her that the news-reel might not be there.

It was there.

SHE CAME IN in the middle of a French costume picture about love-making in a big bed with a mirror over it. She wondered how they got the fabric sheen that always went with movie lasciviousness, whether the cloth was really stiff satin as it appeared to be or whether there was some cheap material which photographed like that? The actress looked as though her breasts had been gilded to match the gleam of the stuffs around her. The French words were finely enunciated. The audience tittered in Spanish. A young man guffawed over and over on the same pitch. A French gentleman in modern clothes—top hat and cane—sang something which ended the picture and tied it all together, judging from the louder laughing and audible translation. Then the theatre was dark. There was the jerking flicker of a reel starting and stopping, conglomerate unhuman figures and motion, whistles from the audience. It started. She saw the word *noticias* and this did not match the way the word had looked in her mind's eye. She corrected the mental image.

She was burning hot from head to foot. The prisoner of war scene opened the news-reel. Here they had omitted the cannons. The boys were before her eyes. She had not doubted she was going to see them but this did not keep her from being frightened.

She had long ago given the boys names. Chris was a slender blond who was whittling aimlessly. He stood there all during the picture, the one or two long dear moments. "I love him with all my heart," she whispered to herself, really forming the words to make them solid. (She knew she loved Chris that much because of her pent-up love and terror for Jerry.) She looked sideways to the right but without shifting her head. Now it was Walter on the screen, dear Walter with a deep stubble on his face and a scarf wrapped around his neck. "He has a cold," she thought, this time not saying it, and wondering why she had never thought it before. She remembered faster than lightning many and many a cold-remedy including steaming eucalyptus oil. Jerry had always had colds when he was little, and that had worked the

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best. She imagined she smelled eucalyptus. The smell was a barrier she was holding on to, to keep the movie from going ahead. And she managed to keep it back. But all the same it did come to the boy who might be Jerry.

How many times had she thought about that ring: by the law of averages could another wife have designed another exact ring for her husband? Or could it maybe have been that she herself did not design it, but that the drawing she had taken into the jeweller had been skilfully changed and incorporated by him into some ring he had in stock and she had thought it was hers, and so some other person might have had one like it? There was the hand on the gate post, and the ring. The hand looked chapped and wizened, not a boy's.

THE BOY to whom it belonged began to turn. Her eyes blinked, waiting for the end, now anxious for the roller-skaters that came after and whom she knew almost as well as she knew the boys. He turned farther round. With her eyes riveted on him she could still see that Chris, in the back, looked up for the first time, and that he lifted his hand from whittling, abruptly, as if he were saying, don't do it, don't take the picture. The face of the boy who turned, now filling the camera, unmercifully filling the screen, was Jerry's face, but it was blank, as empty as an idiot's. He grimaced with his mouth and the hand with the ring was lifted to catch the twitching, trying to hold it. His eyes were focused straight out and his mother drowned in those vacant eyes.

There was an indrawn breath of horror from the audience and then the anxious and everlasting titter. And Marian heard everything. She saw everything.

Then a man was talking to her. "May I help you, madam? May I not help you?"

She heard her own breathing which was like someone gasping for the last of life. The man, and then a woman, took her gently arm-in-arm. She had been plucking at her mouth. The helping woman entwined her fingers with hers, and they brought her out into the light.

"Please madam, to where may we help you to go? Are you in this hotel?"

She shook her head, unable yet to speak.

"May I not call a doctor?"

"No, no." She knew now she would be able to take care of herself. She wanted to drive her car, in motion and tension to find rest. She gave them the parking tag. Once she looked at them while they were all waiting for the car and she saw she would always and forever know them and be known by them. Probably there would never be a chance for more than this four minutes in a garage waiting-room, but because of her pain and her trouble they did not try to conceal themselves. She did not have to describe them to herself. She knew them and they her.

"Madam, is it for you to drive all right?" He said the double *l* against the *r* as if it were a caress that one known stranger was permitted to give another.

"Yes," she said, and "Goodbye and thanks." For the first time she felt like crying, and it was because she had to say goodbye to them. The man said goodbye and the woman beside him said nothing.

She drove out to the park and around for a while. And then she knew she must go to a place—the flight was ended—and that she had no place to go except the flower stands. She had marked that for return and she must return to it.

She went around the Dolores traffic circle once not finding any room to park. The second time there was a place; and right in front of it, the opener-and-closer of doors, the idiot, sat on the curb with his knees doubled over into the gutter. He was sleeping, his head thrown back against a telephone pole. His hands were thrown down on the cement of the sidewalk, no longer trembling, but abandoned. Nor was his head trembling and shaking and guttering. His face asleep was beautiful. He was not old, no, not old nor bloated as she had thought him, but thin and defenceless as the sleeping young are, beautiful, and an idiot.

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FILM

The Death of Marilyn Monroe

By Diana Trilling

IT WAS on a Sunday morning in August, 1962, now almost a year ago, that Marilyn Monroe, aged 36, was found dead in the bedroom of her home in Los Angeles, her hand on the telephone as if she had just received or, far more likely, been about to make a call. On the night table next to her bed stood a formidable array of medicines, among them a bottle that had held 25 Nembutal pills, now empty. Two weeks later a team of psychiatrists, appointed by the state in conformity with Californian law, brought in its report on the background and circumstances of her death, declaring it a suicide. There had, of course, never been any suggestion of foul play. The death was clearly self-inflicted, a climax of extended mental suffering. In fact, it was soon revealed that on Saturday evening Marilyn Monroe had made an emergency call to the psycho-analyst who had been treating her for acute sleeplessness, her anxieties and depression, and that he had paid her a visit. But the formal psychiatric verdict had to do with the highly technical question of whether the overdose of barbiturates was purposeful or accidental: had Marilyn Monroe *intended* to kill herself when she took the 25 sleeping pills? The jury of experts now ruled it was purposeful: she had wanted to die.

It is an opinion, or at least a formulation, that can bear, I believe, a certain amount of modification. Obviously, I'm not proposing that Marilyn Monroe's death was accidental in the sense that she took so large a dose of pills with no knowledge of their lethal properties. But I think it would be more precise to call this kind of death incidental rather than purposeful—incidental to the desire to escape the pain of living. I am not a psychiatrist and I never knew Marilyn Monroe, but it seems to me that a person can want to be released from consciousness without seeking actual death; that someone can want to stop living without wishing to die. And this is my feeling about Marilyn Monroe; that even when she had spoken of "wanting to die" she really meant that she wanted to end her suffering, not her life. She wanted to destroy consciousness rather than herself. Then, having taken the pills, she realised she might never return from the sleep she craved so passionately and reached for the phone for help.

BUT THIS IS, OF COURSE, only speculation, and more appropriately engaged in by the medical profession than by the layman. For the rest of us, the motives surrounding Marilyn Monroe's suicide fade in importance before the all-encompassing reality of the act itself: Marilyn Monroe terminated her life. While the medical experts pondered the delicate difference between accident and suicide, the public recognised that the inevitable had at last occurred: Marilyn Monroe had killed herself. Shocked and grieved as everyone was, no one was at all surprised that she had died by her own hand, because for some years now the world had been prepared for just some such tragic outcome to one of the extraordinary careers of our time.

THE POTENTIALITY of suicide or, at any rate, the threat of extreme mental breakdown had been, after all, conveyed to us by virtually every news story about Marilyn Monroe of recent years. I don't mean that it had been spelled out that she would one day take her life or otherwise go off the deep psychic end. But no one seemed able to write about her without reassuring us that despite her instability and the graveness of her emotional problems, she was still vital and eager, still, however precariously, a going concern. Marilyn Monroe was an earnest, ambitious actress, determined to improve her skill; Marilyn Monroe had failed in several marriages but she was still in pursuit of fulfilment in love; Marilyn Monroe had several times miscarried but she still looked forward to having children; Marilyn Monroe was seriously engaged in psycho-analysis; Marilyn Monroe's figure was better than ever; she was learning to be prompter; she was coping, or

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was struggling to cope, with whatever it was that had intervened in the making of her last picture—so, on the well-worn track, ran all the news stories. Even what may have been her last interview to appear in print (by the time it came out, she was already dead) sounded the same dominant chord of hopefulness, telling us of a Marilyn Monroe full of confidence that she would improve her acting and find her roles, and that between the two therapies, hard work and psycho-analysis, she would achieve the peace of mind that had for so long eluded her.

Where there is this much need for optimism, surely there is great peril, and the public got the message. But what is striking is the fact that throughout this period of her mounting difficulties, with which we were made so familiar, the popular image remained intact. Whatever we were told of her weak hold on life, we retained our image of Marilyn Monroe as the very embodiment of life energy. I think my response to her death was the common one: it came to me with the impact of a personal deprivation but I also felt it as I might a catastrophe in history or in nature; there was less in life, there was less of life, because she had ceased to exist. In her loss life itself had been injured.

IN MY OWN INSTANCE, it happens that she was already an established star before I knew her as anything except the latest pin-up girl. There is always this shield of irony some of us put up between ourselves and any object of popular adulation, and I had made my dull point of snubbing her pictures. Then one evening I chanced on a television trailer for *Bus Stop*, and there she was. I'm not even sure I knew whom I was seeing on the screen, but a light had gone on in the room. Where everything had been grey there was all at once an illumination, a glow as of something beyond the ordinarily human. It was a remarkable moment, of a kind I don't recall having had with any other actress, and it has its place with certain rare, cherished experiences of art such as my youthful remembrance of Pavlova, the most perfect of performing artists, whose control of her body was like a radiance, or even the quite recent experience of seeing some photographs of Nijinsky in motion. Marilyn Monroe was in motion, too, which is important, since no still picture could quite catch her electric quality; in posed pictures the redundancy of flesh was what first imposed itself, dimming one's perception of its peculiar aliveness, of the translucence that infused body with spirit. In a moment's flash of light, the ironies with which I had resisted this sex idol, this object of an undifferentiating public taste, dropped from me never to be restored.

But mine was a minority problem; the world had long since recognised Marilyn Monroe's unique gift of physical being and responded to it as any such gift of life demands. From the start of her public career it had acknowledged the genius of biology or chemistry or whatever it was that set this young woman apart from the general kind. And once it had admitted her magic, nothing it was to learn of her "morbidity" could weigh against the conviction that she was alive in a way not granted the rest of us, or, more accurately, that she communicated such a charge of vitality as altered our imagination of life, which is of course the whole job and wonder of art.

SINCE HER DEATH it has occurred to me that perhaps the reason we were able to keep these two aspects in which we knew Marilyn Monroe—her life affirmation and her impulse to death—in such discreet balance was that they never presented themselves to us as mutually exclusive but, on the contrary, as two intimately related, even expectable, facets of her extraordinary endowment. It is as if the world that loved Marilyn Monroe understood that her superabundant biology had necessarily to provoke its own restraint, that this is the cruel law by which nature, or at least nature within civilisation, punishes those of us who ask too much of life or bring too much to life. We are told that when one of the senses is defective, nature frequently provides a compensation in one of the other senses; the blind often hear better than the seeing, or have a sharper sense of touch. What we are not told but perhaps understand nonetheless is the working of nature's system of negative compensation—the price we pay for gift; the revenge that life seems so regularly to take upon distinction. Certainly our awareness of the more, the "plus," in Marilyn Monroe prepared us for some sort of minus. The fact that this young woman whose biological gift was so out of the ordinary was in mental pain seemed to balance the ledger. And one can speculate that had we not known of her emotional suffering, we would have been prepared for some other awful fate for her—an airplane disaster, maybe, or a deforming illness. So superstition may be thought of as an accurate reading of the harder rules of life.

And yet it is difficult to suppose the gods could be all that jealous. Had Marilyn Monroe not been enough punished in childhood to ensure her against further misfortune? Once this poor, forlorn girl had been so magically brought into her own, the most superstitious of us had the right to ask happiness for her ever after. It was impossible to think of Marilyn Monroe except as Cinderella. The strange power of her physical being seemed best explained and justi-

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fied by the extreme circumstances of her early life—the illegitimate birth, the mad mother, the orphanage and near-mad foster homes, the rape by one of her early guardians. If there was no good fairy in Marilyn Monroe's life and no Prince Charming, unless Hollywood, this didn't rob her story of its fairy-book miraculousness; it merely assimilated to the old tale our newer legend of the self-made hero or heroine. Grace Kelly had had her good Philadelphia family to pave her path and validate her right to a crown. But Marilyn Monroe reigned only by virtue of her beauty and her determination to be raised out of the squalor and darkness, and to shine in the full, the fullest, light. It is scarcely a surprise that the brighter her radiance, the more we listened for the stroke of midnight that would put a limit on such transcendence.

BUT IT WAS NOT ONLY the distance Marilyn Monroe had travelled from her unhappy beginnings that represented for us a challenge of reality, to be punished by reality. If her gift is to be regarded not as that of the stage or screen, which I think it primarily was not, but as the gift of biology, she was among those who are greatly touched with power; she was of the true company of artists. And her talent was so out of the range of the usual that we were bound to feel of it that it was not to be contained in society as we know it; therefore it proposed its own dissolution. Like any great artistic gift, Marilyn Monroe's power of biology was explosive, a primitive and savage force. It had, therefore and inevitably, to be a danger both to herself and to the world in which it did its work. All art is fierce in the measure that it matters, finally, and in its savagery it chooses either to push against society, against the restrictions that hedge it in, or against the artist himself. And no doubt it is the incapacity of most human beings to sustain this inordinate pressure that accounts for the fact that the artist is an exception in any civilised population. To mediate between the assault upon oneself and upon society, to keep alive in the battle and come out more or less intact, is a giant undertaking in which the native endowment of what we call talent is probably but a small element.

AMONG THE VERY FEW weapons available to the artist in this monstrous struggle, naïveté can be the most useful. But it is not at all my impression that Marilyn Monroe was a naïve person. I think she was innocent, which is very different. To be naïve is to be simple or stupid on the basis of experience, and Marilyn Monroe was far from stupid; no one who was stupid could have been so quick to turn her wit against herself, or to manage the ruefulness with which she habitually replied to awkward questioning. To be innocent is to suffer one's experience without being able to learn self-protection from it; as if will-lessly, innocence is at the mercy of experience, unable to mobilise counterforces to fortune.

Of Ernest Hemingway, for example, I feel much as I do of Marilyn Monroe, that he was unable to marshal any adequate defence against the painful events of his childhood, and this despite his famous toughness and the courage he could call upon in war, in hunting, in all the dangerous enterprises that seduced him. He was an innocent man, not a naïve man, though not always intelligent. Marilyn Monroe offers us a similar paradox. Even while she symbolised an extreme of experience, of sexual knowingness, she took each new circumstance of life, as it came to her or as she sought it, like a new-born babe. And yet this was what made her luminous —her innocence. The glow was not rubbed off her by her experience of the ugliness of life because finally, in some vital depth, she had been untouched by it.

From the psychiatrist's point of view, too much innocence, a radical disproportion between what has happened to a person and what he has absorbed from his experience, is a symptom, and alarming. It can indicate a rude break in his connection with himself, and if he is in treatment, it suggests a difficult cure, since, in emotional logic, he will probably be as impervious to the therapy as to the events through which he has passed, and yet without any mitigation of suffering. In the creative spheres, an excess of innocence unquestionably exercises an enormous fascination on us; it produces the purity of expression which leads us to say of an artistic creation or performance that it is "out of this world." But the psychiatric judgment has to pick its way on tiptoe between the gift and the pathology. What constitutes a person's art may eventually spell his emotional undoing.

I CAN SUPPOSE of Marilyn Monroe that she was peculiarly elusive to the psychiatrists or analysts who tried to help her, that emotionally speaking she presented herself to them as a kind of blank page on which nothing had been written, failing to make the connection between herself and them even as she pleaded for it. And yet disconnection was at the heart of her gift, it defined her charm for the world, much as Hemingway's dissociation from his own experience was determinative of his gift.

For several decades, scores of writers have tried to imitate Hemingway's style: the flexibility and purity of his prose, the bright, cogent distance he was able to put between himself

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and the object under examination. But none has succeeded. And I believe this is because his prose was, among many other things, a direct report of the unbridgeable distance between external reality and his emotions. Just so, Marilyn Monroe was inimitable. Hollywood, Broadway, the night-clubs: they all regularly produce their quota of sex queens, but the public takes them and leaves them, or doesn't really take them; the world is not enslaved as it was by Marilyn Monroe because none but Marilyn Monroe could suggest such a purity of sexual delight. The boldness with which she could parade herself and yet never be gross, her sexual flamboyance and bravado which yet breathed an air of mystery and even reticence, her voice which carried such ripe overtones of erotic excitement and yet was the voice of a shy child—these complications were integral to her gift. And they described a young woman trapped in some never-never land of unawareness.

WHAT I IMPLY HERE, of course, is a considerable factitiousness in Marilyn Monroe as a sexual figure. Certainly the two or three men I've known who met her in "real life" were agreed on her lack of direct sexual impact; she was sweet and beautiful and lovely, yes, but somehow not at all the arousing woman they had expected. The nature of true sexuality is most difficult to define; so much of what we find sexually compelling has its source in fantasies that have little to do with the primary sexual instinct. Especially in the case of a movie star we enter a realm where dream and biology make their easiest merger. The art of acting is the art of *performing as if*, and the success of this feat of suggestion depends upon the degree to which it speaks to some fantasy of the onlookers.

Marilyn Monroe spoke to our dreams as much as to our animal nature, but in a most unusual way. For what she appealed to was our determination to be rid of fantasy and to get down to the rock-bottom actuality. She gratified our wish to confront our erotic desires without romance, without diversion. And working within a civilisation like ours, in which sexuality is so surrounded with restraints and fears and prohibitions, she perhaps came as close as possible to giving us the real thing. But she didn't give us the real thing; she merely acted as if she were giving it to us. She glamourised sexuality to the point at which it lost its terrors for us; and maybe it was this veil that she raised to sexual reality that permitted women, no less than men, to respond to her so generously. Instinctively, I think, women understood that this seemingly most sexual of female creatures was no threat to them.

THE MYTH of Marilyn Monroe was thus even more of a myth than we realised, for this girl who was supposed to release us from our dreams into sexual actuality was in all probability not actual even to herself. Least of all could she have been sexually actual to herself and at the same time such a marvellous public performer of sex, such a conscious artist of sex. And we can conjecture that it was this deep alienation from her own feelings, including her sexual feeling, that enabled her to sustain the disorder of her early years even as long and as well as she did, and to speak of her awful childhood so simply and publicly. For most of us, the smallest "shame" in our past must be kept locked from others. We prefer that the least menacing of skeletons remains in the closet lest our current image of ourselves be violated by their emergence into the open. But Marilyn Monroe had no need for such reserves. She told the public the most gruesome facts of her personal history, for all the world as if we on the outside were worthy of such confidences—except that in some odd, generous response to her innocence, we exceeded ourselves in her instance and didn't take the advantage of her that we might have. Judged from the point of view of what we require of the artist, that he have the will and fearlessness to rise above the conventions which bind those of us with less gift, Marilyn Monroe's candour about her early life was something to be celebrated. But from another point of view her frankness was a warning that the normal barriers of self-protection were down or non-existent, leaving her grievously exposed to the winds of circumstance.

AND INDEED THE VERY WORD "exposed" is a keyword in the pattern of her life. She was an actress and she exposed her person and her personality to the public gaze. She was an exposed human being who told the truth about herself too readily, too publicly. And more than most actresses, she exposed her body, with but inadequate understanding of what this involved. We recall, for instance, the awkward little scandal about her having once posed naked for a calendar and the bewildered poise, the really untoward innocence and failure of comprehension, with which she met the dismay of her studio, as if to say, "But that was me yesterday when I needed money. That isn't me to-day; to-day I have money." Just as to-day and yesterday were discontinuous with each other, she was discontinuous with herself, held together, one feels, only and all too temporarily by her success.

And this success was perhaps more intimately connected with her awareness of her physical appeal that we always understood. It may well

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have been the fact that she was so much and so admiringly in the public eye that gave Marilyn Monroe the largest part of her sense of a personal identity. Not long before her death, we now discover, she had herself photographed in the nude, carefully editing the many pictures as if to be certain she left the best possible record for posterity. The photographs leave, however, a record only of wasted beauty, at least of the famous body—while Marilyn Monroe's face is lovely as ever, apparently unscarred by her intense suffering, her body looked ravaged and ill, already drained of life. Recently the pictures have been published in an expensive magazine devoted to erotica. If their high price, prohibitive to the general buyer, could be interpreted as a precaution against their being too easily available to a sensation-seeking audience, the restraint was not really necessary. At the last, the nude Marilyn Monroe could excite no decent viewer to anything but the gentlest pity, and some terror.

But even before this ultimate moment the public success had been threatened. The great career was already failing. There had not been a Marilyn Monroe movie for a long time, and the last film she had worked on had had to be halted because she was unable to appear. And there was no private life to fall back upon, not even the formal structure of one: no marriage, no family, apparently not even friends. One had come, indeed, to think of her as the loneliest of people, so that it was not without bitterness that, on her death, one discovered that it was not only oneself who had wished to help her but many other strangers, especially women to whose protectiveness her extreme vulnerability spoke so directly. But we were the friends of whom she knew nothing, and among the people she knew it would seem that real relationships were out of reach across the desert emptiness that barricades whoever is out of touch with his feelings. One thinks of her that last evening of her life, alone and distraught, groping for human comfort and finding nothing but those endless bottles of medicine, and one confronts a pathos worse than tragedy.

CERTAINLY it strains justice as well as imagination that the world's most glamorous woman should have been alone, with no date, on a Saturday night—for it was, in fact, a Saturday night when she killed herself. On other nights but Saturday, we are allowed our own company. Saturday night is when all American boys and girls must prove themselves sexually. This is when we must be "out," out in the world where we can be seen among the sexually chosen. Yet the American girl who symbolised sexual success for all of us spent her last Saturday night alone in despair. Every man in the country would have wanted to date Marilyn Monroe, or so he would say, but no man who knew her did.

Or, contemplating her loneliness, we think of her funeral, which, contrived to give her the peace and privacy that had so strenuously eluded her throughout her life, yet by its very restraint and limited attendance reminded us of the limitations of her actual connection with the world. Joe DiMaggio, who had been her husband for a few brief months earlier in her career, was the chief mourner. It was DiMaggio to whom, she had told us, it was impossible to be married because he had no conversation; at meals, instead of talking to her, he read the papers or looked at television. The more recent husband, *with* conversation, was not present, no doubt for his own inviolable reasons, but it was saddening. I do not know what, if anything, was read at the service, but I'd like to think it was of an elevated and literary kind, such as might be read at the funeral of a person of the first intellectual rank.

For of the cruelties directed at this young woman even by the public that loved her, it seems to me that the most biting, and unworthy of the supposedly enlightened people who were particularly guilty of it, was the mockery of her wish to be educated, or thought educated. Granting our right to be a bit confused when our sex idol protests a taste for Dostoevsky, surely the source of our discomfort must yet be located in our suspicions of Dostoevsky's worth for us and in our own sexual unease rather than in Marilyn Monroe. For what our mockery signifies is our disbelief that anyone who has enough sexuality needs to read Dostoevsky. The notion that someone with Marilyn Monroe's sexual advantages could have wanted anything except to make love robbed us of a prized illusion, that enough sexual possibility is enough everything.

I doubt that sex was enough anything for Marilyn Monroe, except the means for advancing herself in the world. One of the touching revelations of her early life was her description of how she discovered that somehow she was sexually different from other girls her age: the boys all whistled at her and crowded to her like bears to honey, so she came to realise that she must have something special about her, which she could use to rise above her poor circumstances. Her sexual awareness, that is, came to her from outside herself. It would be my guess that it remained outside her always, leaving a great emptiness, where a true sexuality would have supplied her with a sense of herself as a person with connection and content.

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THIS VOID she tried to fill in every way available, with worldly goods, with fame and public attention and marriage, and also in ways that turned out to be unavailable, like children and domesticity—nothing could be more moving than the eagerness with which she seized upon a Jewish mother-in-law, even upon Jewish ceremonials and cooking, as if in the home life of her last husband's people she would find the secret of emotional plenitude. She also tried to fill her emptiness with books and learning. How mean-spirited can we be, to have denied her whatever might have added to her confidence that she was really a solid person and not just an uninhabited body?

And that she had the intellectual capacity for education there can be no question, had it but been matched with emotional capacity. No one without a sharp native intelligence could have spoofed herself as gracefully as she did or parried reporters with such finesse. If we are to judge by her interviews, she was as singularly lacking in the endemic off-stage dullness of actors and actresses, the trained courtesy and charm that is only another boring statement of their self-love, as she was deficient in the established defences of her profession: one recalls no instance of even implied jealousy of her colleagues or of censure of others—directors, script-writers, husbands—for her own failures. Her generosity of spirit, indeed, was part of the shine that was on her. But unfortunately it spared everyone but herself; she had never studied self-justification. To herself she was not kind. She made fun of herself and of all that she had to go on in life: her biology. Certainly this added to her lovableness but it cut from under her the little ground that she could call her own. When she exhibited her sexual abundance with that wonderful, gay exaggeration of hers, or looked wide-eyed upon the havoc she wrought, it was her way of saying, "Don't be afraid. I don't take myself seriously so you don't have to take me seriously either." Her talent for comedy, in other words, was a public beneficence but a personal depredation, for, far more than most people, she precisely needed the assurance that she weighed in the scheme of human life, that she had substance and reality, that she had all the qualifications that make for a person we take seriously. Herself a supplicant, she gave us comfort. Herself a beggar, she distributed alms.

AT HER DEATH, several writers of goodwill who undertook to deal with the tragedy of her suicide blamed it on Hollywood. In the industry that had made millions from her and in the methods by which Hollywood had exploited her, they found the explanation of her failed life; they wrote about her as the sacrificial lamb on the altar of American vulgarity and greed. I share their disgust with Hollywood and I honour their need to isolate Marilyn Monroe from the nastiness that fed on her, but I find it impossible to believe that this girl would have been an iota better off were Hollywood to have been other than what we all know it to be, a madness in our culture.

The self-destructiveness that Marilyn Monroe carried within her had not been put there by the "system," however overbearing in its ugliness. Just as her sweetness was her own, and immune to the influences of Hollywood, her terrors were also her own. They were not implanted in her, though undoubtedly they were increased, by the grandiosity of being a star. Neither for better nor worse, I feel, was she essentially falsified or distorted by her public role, though she must often have suffered cruelly from the inescapability of the public glare. In fact, it would be my conjecture that had she never gone into the movies and become rich and world-famous, her troubled spirit would long since have had its way with her. She would have been equally undone, and sooner, and with none of the many alleviations and compensations that she must have known in these years of success.

THIS DOESN'T MEAN that I don't think she was a "victim." But she was not primarily a victim of Hollywood commercialism, or exploitation, or of the inhumanity of the press. She was not even primarily a victim of the narcissistic inflation that so regularly attends the grim business of being a great screen personality. Primarily she was a victim of her gift, a biological victim, a victim of life itself. It is one of the excesses of contemporary thought that we like to blame our very faulty culture for tragedies that are inherent in human existence—at least, inherent in human existence in civilisation. I think Marilyn Monroe was a tragedy of civilisation, but this is something quite else again from, and even more poignant than, being a specifically American tragedy.

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P. J. Kavanagh

Wherever You Are

Dropped fully grown, conceived by autogenesis,
My smiling devils are gaolers who simulate friendliness
The better to break me. They thrive in the semi-awake
Of the utterly dark of their birth place. One, arm around my neck,
Explaining why he keeps my curtains drawn:
"Why bother to open them? When you look down
I am all the faces of the town!
Be honest now, when did you last see a different one?"
His birth and chatter exhausts me. For peace I lie down and confess
My god is theirs; his name is Nothingness.

But in our darkness the warm-lipped angels also have their places,
More terrible by far,
Whose wings are wands of anamnesis,
More than flesh and blood and brain can bear.
O my devils are easier, teaching forgetfulness!
But if I turn away
From these insupportable angels of memory,
I pull a blind of horror between me
And the natural world: pig-snout and bird-claw instead of hands and faces.

You must save me angels! Give me your instruction!
"The only love that now you can know is love-in-action.
So lift up your back from your bed,
Strain till the sweat is running down your head
To repeat like a parrot what we tell you to say:
I believe in you, angels. Devils, you lie."

And now on the screen of myself, in the dark, I can see
Each face, divided, hurt like all ours are,
That opened like a child's face, like a flower,
While it was turned towards her.

These than hers are easier to remember.

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Quickly now! What phrases can I mutter,
Having reached this far, to weave them like a charm
Against the mocking gaolers round my bed
Before the dark of me begins to swarm
And strangles all the daylight in my head?
How sweeten my tongue? How summon the flavour of her?

Just as prisoners rotting in the black
Of forgotten dungeons pick from their stinking straw
Half-dry faeces, and use them as chalks to draw
Crucifixions, a flower, a beloved name, in the dark,
So I use this, my daylong nightlong back-
And-forth to scratch your name with. You are the law
I live by, in the dark. You, the tenement
By rarest luckiest accident
Of more than you knew, of more than your mirror saw!

And so in the dark I talk to you outloud.
I no longer know if I talk to you or to God.

And what have you to do with prisoners and darkness,
Black and white angels, metaphors of pain,
Whose soul was so strong it retained that initial, mysterious happiness
The rest of us lose at once, and never have again?
You, the silence I strain to listen to,
The landscape of the dark I move through.
And none of these things.
The dark is mine
And yours and ours O help me see
How all the angels of the darknesses agree
That nothing I have, not even my pain is my own.
That under an absence like a stone, I must be gay.

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NOTES & TOPICS

Letter from Alexandria

A SANDSTORM threw a golden pall over Alexandria when I was there again the other day. A vicious, unseasonal storm, three months earlier than the usual *khamsin*, it stiffened the hair with a dung-like crust and smothered even the sight and sound of the sea. Palm trees waved overhead like wraiths and men vanished behind yellow veils as they crossed the street.

Next morning the wind had backed to the north-west and under a clearing sky the Mediterranean was lashing the corniche with the cold fury of a northern sea. Spray cascaded off the tiers of bathing huts beneath the sea wall; the cafés on the rocky promontories were awash and the tall flats that straggle for miles between Ramleh and Montazah Bay were shuttered tight against the wind.

This was Alexandria out of season, when the city turns its back upon the sea, as a sheep puts its rump to a blizzard. Behind the wave-drenched promenades the narrow streets of Alexandria's dockland were pullulating with the introverted life of peasant Egypt, but upon the boulevards and gardens of the European city a great desolation had descended. The ornate villas of the *quartier Grec* were almost visibly brown at the edges, withdrawn and wilting, their gardens ragged with wind-blown paper and creepers too long untrimmed. Behind the rattling doors of the cafés in the Place Zaghloul a few old men crouched over silent games of *tric-trac*. In the bar of the Cecil Hotel, where the potted palms once danced in the hearty fug of British officers on leave from the Western desert, the barman nodded on his stool in solitary boredom.

Since I first knew it a few years ago, Alexandria out of season has always been a little chilly and forlorn, like a pensioner waiting for the warmth of summer to bring back the blood to her cheeks. But this time the chill seemed to strike deeper, to smell less of winter than of death. The peasants in the back streets were the teeming maggots in the corpse.

There is a paradox here, of course. Like every other town in Egypt, Alexandria is growing in numbers. One-and-a-half-million people find a home somewhere within its boundaries now and more are coming every year, thrust off the land of the Nile valley by the pressure of their own fecundity. In summer, when the heat in Cairo is oppressive, half-a-million more arrive for a breath of Mediterranean air. The promenades then are thick with holiday-makers, the public gardens loud with the wail of transistor radios, the beach huts and cafés bursting with young Egypt—dark, shapely and emancipated, with not a veil or a tarboosh to be seen. All this is not dead. It is frighteningly alive—a resurgent Egypt, flooding down the Nile to the Mediterranean shore, as Europe so recently poured its energies the other way. With the turn of the tide the city of Cavafy, Forster, and Durrell has not yet physically disappeared like the city of Alexander when the Arabs arrived, but it has just as effectively ceased to be. In the 10 years since Farouk stepped into exile aboard his yacht, from the terrace of the palace at Ras el Tin, European Alexandria has been washed into history.

THIS IS NOT SOMETHING for which Gamal Abdul Nasser must take all the blame. Like Algiers and Tunis—or Leptis Magna and Cyrene—Alexandria was one of those grappling hooks that Europe cast upon Africa in a time of imperial expansion. With the decline of her power, the hooks were cut away again. As soon as World War II was over the writing was on the wall for Alexandria's European community, and the far-sighted were already getting out. In their heyday, Europeans and Jews together may have numbered 200,000. By 1945 there were less than 150,000. If there are more than 30,000 now I should be surprised. Since 1952 at least 70,000 must have gone. The British and French have almost totally disappeared, cleared out in the aftermath of Suez. So have the Jews, who alone numbered scores of thousands. The Italians, the Maltese, and some indeterminate Levantines hang on in handfuls here and there, and the Greeks, who formed the biggest of all the European colonies and gave the city much of its distinctive Mediterranean flavour, may muster as many as 20,000 still. But 10 years ago there were 50,000 Greeks in Alexandria, and even after Suez, when the Greek pilots stayed to help the Egyptians in the canal and *enosis* in Cyprus was still a lively possibility uniting Athens to Cairo in opposition to the British, many of them believed that the European exodus would never include them. "That was our mistake," said one of them this time. "The others got out when they still could. The British and French even got paid for leaving, thanks to Anthony Eden. But we must pay for staying." And pay they do, as the government in Cairo snatches up the economic reins that used to lie so profitably in Alexandrian hands, and firmly asserts that Egypt is for the Egyptians now.

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Not for nothing, after all, is Nasser the first true Egyptian to rule his country since Alexander arrived. For most of the 2,300 years in between Egypt has been either milked or spurned by foreigners; now an Egyptian is milking and spurning them.

The Alexandrian cotton market, once one of the great commodity markets of the world and the channel for three-quarters of Egypt's foreign earnings, has been nationalised. The bourse is empty and the brokers are out of business. Barclay's *DCO* and the *Credit Lyonnais* are now the Bank of Alexandria and the Misr Bank. The Mohammed Ali Club, once the *Athenaeum* of Alexandrian society, has become a "Government Cultural Centre." The grotesque royal palace at Montazah is an empty casino. The British Cricket Club ground has been acquired by Alexandria University as a hockey pitch, the Avenue Belgique is now the Avenue Lumumba, and members of the Yacht Club may not take their boats beyond the harbour mouth lest they set sail for Cyprus with their valuables in an effort to get away from it all.

The Alexandrian telephone book reads like a Levantine requiem. Bianchi and Bassilis, Athanassacopoulos and Papadopoulos, Zarb and Zerbini, Karam, Smouha, Moscatelli and Salvago, Marcopolis and Marcantonaki—most of them gone already, and the rest hoping that they will be next to invite their friends to a farewell party. For those that remain, embedded in the ruins of their own past, Pastroudis' café is still a source of bitter solace, with its memories of the old days; and elderly Greek couples still turn up of an evening at the Union Bar to dine on practically the only decent European food still cooked in Egypt—for the kitchen suffers along with the salons and the bank balances when history is on the move.

BUT FOR ALL OF THEM life has really ended already. They are simply seeing out their last years in the ivory towers of heightened memory and straightened circumstances. There is the Comte Patrice de Zogheb, for example, a true Alexandrian if ever there was one, with a French wife, Danish nationality, Italian title, and Syrian descent, an old Etonian and an amateur of the arts, squatting in his penthouse in the middle of the city and contemplating with the bland resignation of his 72 years the sequestration of all his property and the decline and fall of everything he was born to. "Come on Sunday to my *Messiah*," he said. "I've done it every year for a quarter of a century, you know. Of course, it's only on gramophone records now—but the British Consul-General will open the proceedings."

There is Stelios Comoutsos, a Greek waiter with a passion for history, who has spent his life's savings digging up the pavements of his native city in a fruitless search for the tomb of Alexander. There is Jimmy, whom nobody but his mother knows by any other name and whom his father may never have known at all. "I'm half-Irish meself" says he, lurking in a doorway of the Place Zaghloul. Jimmy likes to call himself a guide, claiming nameless delights at his command; and once, before I knew any better, I accepted his offer of an introduction to the Bombay Speller, thinking that I might meet some exotic fakir washed up on these shores long ago, like Jimmy's father perhaps, among the wrack of the British Empire. But instead I was taken to see the monumental column erected in honour of the Emperor Diocletian and known to Alexandrians as Pompey's Pillar—the most pointless but imposing of the few remaining relics of the earlier Empire that began Alexandria's legend.

That Empire, too, was submerged by alien tides; and before Europe reclaimed Alexandria through Bonaparte and Mohammed Ali, the pearl of the Mediterranean had declined into a fishing village. Its latter-day revival has been of shorter duration than its early glory. Events move faster now than then, and a single century of European prosperity is all the modern city has enjoyed. It is easy to be too sentimental about its fate. Modern Alexandria produced nobody to compare with Euclid and Eratosthenes, Plotinus and Athanasius. It reflected the harsher qualities of 19th-century imperialism as well as some of the sybaritic sophistication of the Levant. It was a base for rapacious adventurers and war profiteers, for merchants and bankers, consuls and concubines—the middlemen of diplomacy, trade, and culture. It was not, essentially, a creative city; yet it did create its own legend as a glorious, decadent paramour among cities—a whore of the golden east. In our more puritan, bread-and-butter century, however, paramours are no longer highly thought of, especially when they come with the wrong passport. Working wives are more the thing.

YET ALEXANDRIA DESERVES its mourners; and one evening on my last visit I talked to one of them, a true lover of his native place. He was a Greek, of course, and for two hours, while the sandstorm rattled the shutters outside, he went through the rubble of his city's past with a nostalgic sieve, catching in the mesh of his memory a score of remarkable figures and institutions, and sighing with pleasure over the visions that my curiosity had compelled him to recall. Suddenly he stopped, as if the memories had become unbearable, and flung up his

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hands, palms outwards, in a gesture of despair. "Gone!" he cried, in a voice of deep severity, "All gone! Tonight we are historians. We speak now only of history."

I left him and went out into the storm, with the sand stinging my eyes and throat, and around me the ghosts of an Alexandria that is always out of season now.

David Holden

Culture & The Cold War

By Christopher Mayhew, Herbert Luethy, et al.

HERBERT LUETHY says some splendidly true things [ENCOUNTER, June], but his basic position appears to me self-contradictory. *Of course* the Communist and non-Communist worlds have become diversified. *Of course* we must roll up our dualist, black-and-white maps.

But then, having buried the dualist world, Mr. Luethy puts forward a reply to Mr. Khrushchev which resurrects dualism in its purest form. He writes:

> Mr. Khrushchev has declared that "all our children will be Communist in the end" and I have no doubt that he is ready to do anything to make them so. Very well, our demands are equally irreducible—we want all the children of Soviet citizens to be free men. . . . (and) we must consider what contributions we would make to it.

Back we go to the old black-and-white world of "Communists" and "free men," and to the philosophical position which so many of us held —with greater justification—in the Stalin era. But why should we concede to Mr. Khrushchev that "Communists" are a clear-cut category of people for whom Mr. Khrushchev is entitled to speak? When Mr. Khrushchev tells us our children will be "Communists," our first reply should be to ask him what he means. Does he mean they will be peace-loving, like the Yugoslav Communists, or warmongers, like the Chinese? Will they be citizens of independent countries, like Cuba, or of colonies like East Germany? Will they have reasonably free access to literature, music, and painting, like the Hungarians, or be victims of cultural authoritarianism like the Russians? Will they be atheists and proletarians like the Vietminh or churchgoers and peasants like the Poles?

And Mr. Khrushchev might well reply similarly to Mr. Luethy—it would be his likeliest and best reaction—"What do you mean by 'free men'?" A high degree of freedom is civilised man's greatest blessing; but freedom is a relative term, and is by no means a common characteristic of non-Communist countries. Is Mr. Luethy's crusade for freedom aimed only at the Communist countries? Obviously, it cannot be, for this would destroy its moral basis. The crusade must be aimed equally at the scores of non-Communist countries where citizens are deprived of personal or political freedom—at Pakistan, Ghana, Iraq, Haiti, Argentine, South Africa, Portugal, Spain, etc. Thus the crusade is in fact not a crusade against Communism at all, but a struggle of quite a different kind.

There are times when international crusading is an obvious moral duty—against monstrous offences against humanity like Nazism and *apartheid*. But in the nuclear age, it is far more important that "Communist" and "non-Communist" countries should learn to live with each other than that they should try to change each other. It is more important to draw attention to the common ground between them than to emphasise and dispute about their differences. There is an obvious contradiction between trying to establish normal relations with a régime and running an ideological campaign which would end in extinction.

So INSTEAD OF ACCEPTING Mr. Khrushchev's outworn dogma about the inevitability of the Communist-Capitalist ideological struggle, we should denounce it as unscientific, sterile, and dangerous—an obstacle to disarmament and peace. The West's greatest ideological weapon is the concept of mutual tolerance—of ideological disarmament. This is something which ordinary people on both sides of the Iron Curtain will warmly support, and something which only non-Communists can offer.

Finally I must add that Mr. Luethy seems to know too little of what has been attempted

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and achieved on the Western side in the field of East-West contacts. He writes:

> Our refusal to act would leave the initiative in cultural and intellectual contacts to the Communist governments and to such admirers and sympathisers as they can always find on our side.

Agreed! But scores of non-Communist governments and organisations reached this conclusion several years ago, and have acted on it. The first of many East-West cultural conventions was the British-Soviet Cultural Agreement of 1956. It was an entirely British initiative, later copied by the Russians. As far as British-Soviet contacts are concerned, all the obstacles come from the Soviet side and far more British invitations and initiatives are made than are accepted. Much still remains to be done, but Mr. Luethy is less than fair when he writes that "the West still reacts more than it acts."

Christopher Mayhew

I CONSIDER it a great honour to have been found worthy of such a long and prominent refutation by Mr. Smirnov. My only regret is that the readers of *Pravda* are left guessing as to the reasons for this distinction. Contemptible imperialist *"journaltchiks"* like ENCOUNTER are probably filled every day with such dirty and inept anti-communist propaganda gossip by obscure capitalist mercenary pens like mine, and as there is "no point in attempting to refute"—or even to quote!—"its assertions," why these thunderings over two columns? Maybe experienced *Pravda* readers can find some hint as to why Mr. Smirnov feels hurt; but as they are not informed of the argument of my offending text, and as they cannot possibly obtain it, there is no use in commenting on it further. This unhappily is still the current form of our "dialogue with the communist world" on the official level, and for the present it is vain to expect it otherwise.

If Mr. Smirnov's disagreement with me is a foregone conclusion, I wonder where exactly I disagree with Mr. Christopher Mayhew. I am intellectually and morally opposed to communist party dictatorships; Mr. Mayhew is opposed to them too, however great his peacefulness and good-will. It is rather tiresome to hear again the irrelevant retort: "So you are for Franco, Salazar, Verwoerd, Ayub Khan, *et al*?" No, I am not, and I think I said so very explicitly. After all, we must have some common ideas on what we mean when we say "political freedom." They include the freedom to dissent with our rulers and our ruling systems, and the freedom to gather and publish information and argument supporting our opposition. Intellectually, it is the freedom of heresy—explicitly including the communist heresy which is in its way an authentic offspring of our own western heritage. My argument is that we would have to confront communist ideology in any case, even if Soviet Russia and the Cold War did not exist, and that on the level of ideas, where we can find premises of a common language and of common origins, the debate is not hopeless.

I plead for accepting this ideological debate wherever and whenever it is offered; Mr. Mayhew pleads for "ideological disarmament." I dislike the expression. As long as we disagree with communist party dictatorships, we disagree with their ideological justification which is vital to them and which claims universal validity; why should we shrink from expressing our disagreement? Because they possess nuclear weapons? Here it would be my turn to raise the insidious question: if co-existence means ideological truce, and if we have to co-exist with evil, why should this not be equally true for co-existence with Franco, Verwoerd, *et al*? Because they have no nuclear weapons? Does ideological disarmament mean: Don't contradict powerful rulers—they might get angry?

This is not Mr. Mayhew's conception. But if his proposal of "ideological disarmament" is not meant unilaterally—and I know it is not—it is unhappily unpracticable for the foreseeable future. "Instead of accepting Mr. Khrushchev's outworn dogma about the inevitability of the Communist-Capitalist ideological struggle," Mr. Mayhew tells me, "we should denounce it as unscientific, sterile, and dangerous." So I do. But I am afraid our denouncing Mr Khrushchev's "outworn ideas" (which are not just his personal ones, but the *raison d'être* of the whole régime over which he presides) will not stop the ideological warfare. It will simply be considered as part of our anti-communist "crusade," and, from the point of view of the communist régimes, rightly so.

Mr. Smirnov accuses me of trying to "strike from our hands the most powerful of our weapons—communist party ideology." No; if Mr. Smirnov means intellectual "weapons," I do not ask him to disarm, but only to fight with some honesty. Much more rightly, one year ago, Radio Moscow replied to Mr. Mayhew's proposal of ideological disarmament that this was "an ideological attack on the communists from a position of rabid" (and in another passage, of "zoological") "anti-communism... Mr. Mayhew is not in a position to abolish ideological struggle. No one is." By proposing ideological disarmament, Radio

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"Pravda" and . . .

THE *English magazine* ENCOUNTER*—sorry, not English, but more correctly, published in England—resolved to distinguish itself. In its June number it carried an article by a certain Herbert Lüthy expressively entitled "Culture and the Cold War." As for "culture" the article hardly shines with it; but the "Cold War" fairly gushes from the author's pen.*

Lüthy summons the capitalist world to take the offensive in the ideological struggle against the socialist community. In an attempt to show that this can in fact be done, he maintains that the Communist world is in the grip, no less, of an "ideological crisis," and not just any crisis, but a "profound" one.

"People talk about those ills they suffer from." The profound crisis of bourgeois thought, bourgeois culture, bourgeois morals, the crisis whose existence is acknowledged more or less openly in the countries of the capitalist West, where literally tons of paper have been used up for the description of its concrete manifestations—this crisis ENCOUNTER *tries to turn into an ideological crisis of communism! It is difficult to imagine a dirtier, and at the same time, to put it plainly, a less intelligent exercise.*

THIS IS NOT *the first time the imperialist propagandists have discovered crises, at first in our country, and then in all the countries of the socialist community. As though their wishes were reality, they invariably try to present any difficulty we meet in our progress as the beginning of our end. Acutely aware that the contradictions of their dying world cannot be resolved, they feel an almost pathological need to discover similar contradictions in the socialist world. How else, for example, can we explain such a propagandist gambit as the following from the* ENCOUNTER *opus? "The Soviet system has become vulnerable to the truth." From Herbert Lüthy's entire text—and even more from reading between the lines—it is clear that what is meant by "truth" here is nothing else but bourgeois ideology.*

There is no point in arguing about the substance of his assertions. Life itself, the victorious advance of the socialist idea over our planet, the confidence with which the peoples of the countries of the socialist community repulse any and every ideological diversion of the imperialist forces, irrefutably demonstrate that the author of the ENCOUNTER *article is simply tangled in his own lies.*

But what is more interesting is that throughout this militant apologia for capitalism, the word "capitalism" itself does not once appear; it hides behind such concepts as "truth" or "freedom."

This is no accident, Capitalism is hopelessly compromised in the eyes of the peoples. After all, the champions of capitalist "truth" to-day are represented by Franco and Salazar, Roy Welensky and Tshombe, Chiang Kai-shek and Ngo Dinh Diem. And how indeed could a magazine which pharisaically proclaims its desire to see all Soviet children "free men" write of the "freedom" in whose shelter the black children live in the southern U.S.A., or the "freedom" for the monopolies of the U.S.A. to rob other countries, against which the peoples of Latin America are now rising with more and more determination.

THE TRUTH, *which it is not difficult to extract from the utterances of the* NATO *mouthpiece in England, is that the Atlantic propagandists are more than a little alarmed. "I see no hope" —Lüthy admits in* ENCOUNTER*—"except that of an internal evolution of the communist world. . . ." In other words, now that the hopes of putting an end to socialism by force have crumbled, they are basing their calculations on the hope of striking from our hands the most powerful of our weapons—Communist Party ideology. Hence the demand for an ideological offensive against the Socialist camp.*

Realising that such an offensive, if only because of the rottenness of the soil from which it grows, will inevitably come up against insuperable difficulties, the imperialist propagandists of the type of Lüthy try to give it a helping hand. They frighten people with the idea that it is impossible to establish an "international order worth the name" so long as communism refuses to recognise the inevitability of the continued existence of capitalism. They play shamelessly on that word "freedom," calculating that it will help to attract trusting people to their ideological position and to reduce the striking power of our ideas. This is precisely the aim of the article published in the last number of ENCOUNTER.

But let us remember that Socialist ideas are unconquerable. They are all-powerful, because they are true. And every attack on them, from whatever quarter it comes, whether from capitalist ideologues who have been honoured for their services, or from their helpers working for dubious magazines, will inevitably have one and the same sorry end—the disgrace of those who organise it.

S. SMIRNOV

Pravda (Moscow), 4 June 1963

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Moscow said, Mr. Mayhew quite simply "would *abolish communism*."[1]

Indeed, we all might prefer to co-exist with ideologically disarmed communist régimes, but, until further notice, the concept of such a régime is self-contradictory: communism *is* an ideology.

I AM AFRAID there is some hair-splitting in our argument. We cannot suppress our problem by declaring that we are bored with it. We wish to scrap the Iron Curtain—which, as Mr. Mayhew confirms in his pamphlet (p. 37), "was and is essentially a communist creation"—and to increase the personal contacts with the citizens of communist countries. Unhappily we cannot dictate the conditions of these contacts, the simple search for which is still often regarded as ideological aggression by communist régimes. So let us accept and face such contacts as we find them. Whenever it is possible to speak with private citizens of communist countries without raising ideological issues (and this has become more and more possible on subjects like technology and science, poetry, and even love) and without mentioning the régimes under which we live and they live (though this problem will always crop up in some way, sooner or later), for heaven's sake, let us do so! Many of them are as tired of ideology as we are. But where we are challenged to ideological controversies—and this will continue to be the case in all not-strictly-private contacts—let us not be afraid of controversy. The existence of nuclear bombs is no reason for intellectual cowardice.

Mr. Mayhew calls me a crusader. I plead not guilty. Or else we are all crusaders. In the eyes of *Pravda*, whether we choose ideological disarmament or open ideological debate, as long as we are not all-out fellow-travellers, we will remain, alas, "rabid anti-communist aggressors" and "mouthpieces of imperialism. . . ."

Herbert Luethy

[1] Full texts quoted as appendix to Mr. Mayhew's excellent pamphlet, *Coexistence Plus* (1962).

. . . "Encounter"

TO THE EDITOR, THE GUARDIAN

SIR,—*We do not usually relish the dispiriting spectacle of vituperative attacks on ourselves, but in the case of your republication to-day (June 12) of S. Smirnov's critique of* ENCOUNTER *in* Pravda *[June 4] we think you have done something of a public service. For those of us who believe in the necessity of an East-West dialogue, it would indeed be shortsighted and naive not to recognise how difficult the effort will be, and with how much unfairness, unfriendliness, and sheer intolerance we may patiently have to put up.*

But many of your readers, who now have the full text of Pravda's *polemic against Herbert Luethy's article on "Culture and the Cold War" (in the current* ENCOUNTER*) before them, may not be aware—although we are sure they surmise it—that Mr. Luethy's argument was, in spirit and thesis, quite the opposite of what* Pravda *made it out to be. It was anything but the call for a crusade against Communism on the part of a "capitalist ideologue" and "imperialist propaganda."*

Luethy's article was written as a critique of what we called in our own introduction the "ambivalent, absent-minded, and uninformed" state of Western thinking on the question of East-West cultural relations. It was a plea "to abandon all simplified black-and-white maps of the world." It was an attempt to argue for more open-minded flexibility in East-West relations, addressed especially to those circles in Europe and America whose conception of the cold war makes them shun any contact as either immoral or dangerous.

Luethy specifically "excluded the idea that the schism can be overcome by the physical victory of one camp over the other," and suggested "ways of overcoming it without the renunciation of anything we regard as essential." He advocated "confrontation and competition, contact and communication." He condemned the "impotence of an anti-Communism which remained myopic, comfortable, and unresponsive." Convinced that "the policy of containment has had its day," he held that "we must patiently lever the dialogue out of the sterile polemics of cold war" for "in the debate about ideas it is not we who need be afraid. . . ."

We are less concerned with the preposterous nature of Smirnov's remarks against Herbert Luethy and ENCOUNTER *than with the saddening sign from* Pravda, *official organ that it is, that the old Stalinist techniques are now in play again. There was some evidence in recent times that East and West could speak plainly to each other, and that scientists and men of letters could even exchange views with a modicum of criticism, scepticism, and tolerance. It will, alas, be very difficult for those of us who believe in enlarging cultural relations and the East-West dialogue to cope with the revival of this sterile pattern of distortion and vilification. We can only hope that this period will be short-lived, and that one day soon that cracked old gramophone record will be put away for good.*

—Yours faithfully,

MELVIN J. LASKY, STEPHEN SPENDER,
editors of ENCOUNTER
25 Haymarket, London, S.W.1

THE GUARDIAN
June 18 1963

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News from Pilate in Liverpool

By Paul Winter

ACCORDING to recent newspaper reports, a letter from Pontius Pilate to the Emperor Tiberius was found in Liverpool. In this letter Pilate informs the Emperor of the circumstances of Jesus' crucifixion. He had tried hard to save Jesus' life from the fury of the Jews. He had even sent for reinforcements, some 2,000 men, to prevent the crucifixion. But the troops arrived too late.

The newspapers report that the document from Liverpool was sent to the Vatican Archives with a request that it should be examined, and that it came back from Rome with an expression of the considered opinion that the letter seemed to be a forgery, but (so the report went on) "it is quite possible that it contains historically correct facts because it was written so much closer to the time of the events described..." As a headline in *The Times* (5 February 1963) most succinctly put it: FAKED LETTER MAY BE CORRECT.

It is to be hoped that some future historian will succeed in clearing up the puzzle as to how Pilate's letter came to turn up in Liverpool. It may be that this will never be quite satisfactorily clarified, for the ways of the Lord are mysterious. In the meantime we must content ourselves with what the letter tells us, and try to determine what it contributes to our knowledge of historical fact.

Alas, it tells us nothing significantly new. Almost all that it contains has been known for a long time. It is known that from the 2nd century onward letters were put into circulation, purporting to have been despatched by Pilate with news of the first Good Friday and Easter events. The oldest extant specimen of this type of document comes from the last quarter of the second century. It is addressed to the Emperor Claudius, ruler of Rome in the years 41–54. Pilate's term of office as procurator of Judaea fell in the years 26–36. There is no unanimity among historians as to the exact year of Jesus' death, but no doubt attaches to the fact that it occurred during the period of Pilate's governorship in Judaea. The Emperor in office was Tiberius (14–37). He was succeeded by Caligula, and Claudius became Emperor only a dozen or so years after the crucifixion of Jesus. And yet it is Claudius to whom Pilate's earliest letter is addressed. In all probability this was intentional. No data of Jesus' biography were then or are now available, but a belief was current in Christian circles towards the end of the 2nd century that Jesus had completed the fiftieth year of his life when he died. Irenaeus, the Bishop of Lyons, gave expression to such a belief which was arrived at on purely speculative grounds. The Incarnation, the perfect union between God and man, would be complete—so Irenaeus thought—only if the Son of God had passed through the full span of a mortal's life, experiencing, in addition to the stages of childhood, youth, and early manhood, also the years of maturity. It was commonly held at the time that man reached his full stature at the age of fifty; hence the notion that Jesus must have reached that age before his human career came to its conclusion. Some such reasoning evidently lies behind the fact that Pilate's alleged report about the crucifixion was addressed to Claudius.

In Pilate's belated report to the Emperor, he is supposed to have said:

> ... The chief priests, moved by envy against him, delivered him to me and brought against him one false accusation after another, saying that he was a sorcerer and did things contrary to their law. But I, believing that these things were so, had him scourged and delivered him unto their will. And *they crucified him*. When he was buried, *they set guards* upon him. But while *my soldiers* watched him, he rose again on the third day. Yet so much was the malice of the Jews kindled that they bribed the soldiers asking them to testify that his disciples had stolen the body. The soldiers took the money, but did not keep silence about what had happened. They testified that they saw him arisen.... And I report these things to Your Majesty lest anyone lie otherwise and you should believe the false tales of the Jews....

The document found in Liverpool, said to come from the 4th century, represents but a more elaborate and embellished version of this 2nd century letter addressed to Claudius.

DR. PAUL WINTER *is the author of the scholarly work* ON THE TRIAL OF JESUS *recently published by Basil Blackwell (Oxford, 40s.).*

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THE QUESTION ARISES: why should people, in the 2nd century and later, disturb the ghost of Pilate and compel him to write letters to Claudius or Tiberius, setting himself forth both as a witness to the innocence of Jesus and to the reality of the resurrection? Why should they, long after the events, be anxious to stress Pilate's benevolent attitude towards Jesus and emphasise, even more vividly than the gospels do, his concern to spare his life? To understand the operative motive behind such literary endeavours one has to appreciate the historical conditions under which Christianity existed prior to the reign of Constantine. It was a proscribed religion. Although persecutions were intermittent, the profession of "the Christian name" was an indictable offence. In this situation Christians spared no effort to convince the pagan authorities of the innocence of their beliefs and religious practices. They therefore were prompted to use the device of making Pilate (who, after all, must have had knowledge of the affair) proclaim the innocence of Jesus. The Romans knew little of Christianity, but they knew that Jesus, the presumed founder of that religion, had been sentenced to death by an imperial officer and crucified at his direction. Tacitus reported as much in his *Annals*. Crucifixion, the most shameful of all penalties, was reserved in Roman law for offences against the state. In their pleadings with Roman authorities, Christian apologetes resorted to the expedient of representing Pilate not only as acknowledging the innocence of Jesus, but also as doing his best to save him; he failed only because of the strength of external pressure....

The various "letters of Pilate", calculated to impress pagan Roman magistrates, are a relatively late development in the whole process. Long before any such letter had been heard of, the tendency to describe Pilate as Jesus' friend manifested itself increasingly in the gospel descriptions of Jesus' trial. It is instructive in this connection to observe the ways in which the gospels refer to Pilate's final decision. All the evangelists are reluctant to state plainly that Pilate pronounced the death sentence. Their apologetic motive emerges when we notice how laboriously the evangelists seek to overcome this difficulty. In *Mark* and *Matthew* we read that "Pilate delivered Jesus to be crucified". In *Luke* we find that the governor decided to grant the demand of the Jewish crowd. In *John*, Pilate hands Jesus over physically to the Jews who take him away and crucify him.... All the evangelists are at pains to avoid putting on record the passing of a death sentence by the Roman procurator—but it remains that crucifixion was a Roman punishment, not a Jewish one.

It would be a mistake to assume that the evangelists were guided, primarily, by anti-Jewish animus. In *John* and *Matthew* anti-Jewish, or anti-Judaistic, bias does come in, but as far as *Mark* and *Luke* are concerned—it is these two gospels which contain the oldest and least embellished traditions about Jesus' life—the evangelists' tendency was defensive rather than aggressive. Christianity was considered by the Romans to be a disruptive, politically subversive movement. As Tacitus records, Christians were charged with "hating all mankind". To appease hostility and allay suspicions, apologetes of the new faith employed the technique of portraying the very official who had sentenced Jesus as an authentic witness to the justness of their cause. Tertullian, who not only was a Church Father but a lawyer, assures his readers that Pilate was by his conviction a Christian (*Apologeticus* XXI 24).

OF THE PERSONS whose names appear in the pages of the gospels, Pontius Pilate is one of the few about whom we are relatively well informed from independent sources. One of these sources comes from Pilate's own time: a letter written by Agrippa I, giving a fairly detailed description of Pilate's rule in Judaea and of his personal character. Philo of Alexandria incorporated Agrippa's letter in his *Legatio ad Caium*, and thus we have a sketch of Pilate's character from the hand of one of his contemporaries. Agrippa describes Pilate as "a man of inflexible disposition, ruthless and obstinate" (*Legatio ad Caium* 301); he writes of the governor's corruption, his acts of insolence, his rapine, his inveterate habit of insulting people, his cruelty which resulted in numerous murders of persons who had neither been tried nor legally condemned, and of his inhumanity to those whom he governed. Agrippa concludes his description of Pilate by calling him "a man who at all times displayed ferocious passions". (*Legatio* 302.)*

Of the authenticity of this letter there can be no doubt. It is the earliest extant document to mention Pilate by name, and the only document that comes from one of the procurator's contemporaries. There are writers who, without suggesting that Agrippa's letter is spurious, impute to its author bias against Pilate. This cannot be substantiated; there was no reason for any personal enmity between the two, and in all likelihood they never met. While Pilate was in office in Judaea, Agrippa stayed in

* Lord Altrincham (no historian, he) in *The Guardian* (11 April): "... Even after he (Jesus) had been arrested, he could have been let off if he had given Pilate half a chance. Pilate is one of the most sympathetic minor characters in history: a civilised man of affairs caught between the brute force of bigotry and the blazing fanaticism of genius..."

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Damascus, in Alexandria, and later lived in Rome. Pilate was recalled in the year 36. Only afterwards, in the year 38, did Agrippa return to Palestine. While he may never have met Pilate in person, he certainly had an excellent opportunity for obtaining information concerning the procurator's activities and character. He met people whom Pilate had governed, people who had observed Pilate from close quarters and were able, from experience, to give first-hand reports. Moreover, what Agrippa wrote about Pilate's character is not the only source of our information. Josephus tells us of many of the procurator's actions which bear out Agrippa's picture of an overbearing, headstrong, resolute, and brutally determined military official. Even in the New Testament—in a passage that escaped later revision since it has no connection with the Passion Story—in the thirteenth chapter of *Luke* there is a report of Pilate's butchery among pilgrims, a report which contrasts forcefully with the feeble figure who plays such a meekly vacillating part in the drama of Jesus' trial and death.

The Liverpool document asserts that Pilate had called for "reinforcements." Why should this need have arisen? Even taking the gospel report of the crowd's clamouring for the death of Jesus at its face value, the fore-court of Pilate's palace scarcely had room for more than a few dozen people. To deal with such a number, however recalcitrant, a platoon or two of soldiers would have been ample. We know from Josephus how Pilate was wont to deal with situations of this sort. On one occasion, when a Jewish crowd presented him with a demand he was unwilling to meet, Pilate ordered his soldiers, disguised as civilians, to mingle with the people. When the crowd refused to disperse peacefully, Pilate signalled to his troops to use their cudgels on the demonstrators. Some died from the soldiers' blows, others were trodden to death. The historian Josephus drily comments: "Thus the multitude was reduced to silence" (*The Jewish War,* Book II 175–177; *Jewish Antiquities,* Book XVIII 60–62). It is clear from this report that Pilate had a way of dealing with an unruly crowd that proved unamenable to gentle persuasion.

There was a permanent Roman garrison stationed in Jerusalem of perhaps 600 men. At each Passover, the procurator (who normally resided in Caesarea) came to Jerusalem accompanied by military reinforcements. We have no exact data of the strength of Roman troops in Palestine in the time of Jesus, but it is hardly credible that at a Passover season, when both the garrisons of Jerusalem and Caesarea were on hand, there were anywhere in Palestine a further 2000 Roman soldiers to call upon.

The fictitious Pilate of the Liverpool document is in line with the fictitious character of the Pilate whom the gospels describe as being anxious to placate the Jews and save Jesus from their blood-thirsty vendetta. Yet it would be an error to explain the progressive white-washing of Pilate as a pious fraud. Suggestive imagination had its part in the process. This can be seen from the description of the Barabbas episode in the gospels. What in *Mark* 15, 6 is said to have been Pilate's habit, namely the releasing of a prisoner on the feast-day, has in *John* 18, 39 become a Jewish custom which Pilate was compelled to observe. A late interpolator of *Luke* made it a necessity for Pilate, whatever his habits might have been, to comply with a law which never existed (*Luke* 23, 17). The Christians as a body strove hard to convince the Romans—and in the end, they convinced themselves....

More sensational than the find in Liverpool is the report from the Vatican that the document "though faked, may be historically correct". To substantiate this curious assessment, it is said that even if forged in the 4th century, the fake was "much closer to the time of the event described". To the unthinking, this may sound plausible; but surely it is fallacious. The main criterion for assessing the trustworthiness of any evidence—apart from the question of good or bad faith, and accurate memory—is that it should be founded on immediate observation. But it seems that when the reckoning is in centuries rather than in days and years, people are apt to be more credulous. Is it not irrelevant whether a report of the circumstances of Jesus' crucifixion, written by somebody who was not there, comes from the twentieth, the fourth, or even the first century? Isn't the decisive question whether it is an accurate eye-witness account or not?

On the evangelists' own admission, none of the followers of Jesus witnessed the course of their Master's trial: "...and they all left him, and fled".

Where to? Liverpool?

Peter Wiles and "Convergence"

THE NICE THING about bowling is that you can aim at one pin and knock over nine others as well. The nice thing about analytical writing is that on occasion somebody does it without making believe it is bowling. Peter Wiles' article on the probable convergence of capitalism and communism was not such an occasion.

The subjects of Mr. Wiles' article, as best I can determine, are variously a charming fantasy of

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computor technology, the insidious evils of optimism, the wonders of pure definition, how ideology repealed the managerial revolution, and that consumption may very well vary with the consumer. *En passant*, he expresses, among other things, a strong preference for J. Edgar Hoover rather than Joe McCarthy (not choosing on the simple basis that one is dead), and I object strongly. To compare McCarthyites to Stalinists, and so exclude Hoover from both, is a brain-twister and does a terrible disservice to Tail-Gunner Joe, who represented mostly a form of American entertainment, not politics, and who inadvertently and temporarily grew over-size only because the Republicans hadn't elected a president in twenty years.

A good place for us to begin (I am tempted to say it would have been a good place for Mr. Wiles to begin) is at the end where he says "the systems will converge if at all through the sheer necessities of defence, and not through any internal evolution." Are we to take the word "any" literally? And must we face up to the definitional gambit and refer the term "sheer necessities" to the word "spontaneously" in the title, as in "Will Capitalism and Communism *Spontaneously* Converge?" Isn't the substantial issue somewhat more whether the two systems are similar, in what regards, whether they are apt to be more so or less so in the future, and in response to what pressures, rather than whether a definitional state of convergence will be achieved—and, moreover, "spontaneously"? We look at the world in order to find out what is happening—to the world, not to the concept of spontaneity.

Mr. Wiles mixes up two arguments very badly—that convergence is not occurring, and that its occurrence would not be proper occasion for optimism. As to each, perhaps—but separately, please. Besides, the issue is similarity, not convergence-to-identity. And besides again, observable or probable similarities may or may not be happy facts. (I am willing to entertain the idea right now that existing Soviet-American similarities contribute substantially to the current conflict.) The two countries are now or soon will be competing in industrial production, social welfare, space, armament, technological irrigation of arid areas, and the high jump. They compete because they are similar enough to compete. And it is true of all competitors that they become even more similar *as* they compete: they copy each other because each selects only what wins, and since both want to win, both select the same things.

The consequences of the fact that both have already selected the Bomb may or may not be spontaneous, but who cares? And on what basis can it be said that the major political action necessary on each side to prepare for the acceptance on each side of a general agreement to forestall general war does not involve "internal evolution"? (Or are we here up against that hoary survival of the academy, the neat departmental distinction between economics and politics?)

THE "STRONG" CASE for convergence, according to Mr. Wiles, is "that new rational methods of economic planning must eventually supersede both the free market and the arbitrary Stalinist system of *a priori* allocations." No: the "strong" case for convergence is that it will happen, to the extent that it happens, in fact rather than in theory (especially rather than in the theory of the academic economist). *What* free market? In the United States? Now, really! The United States is a corporate economy decisively underwritten by the government. The fact that nobody baldly admits this in public is a significant ideological fact and a horribly embarrassing cultural one—but the economic-political fact remains quite clear to all clear thinkers. Without a lot of discussion, Russia is too centralised and the U.S. is too de-centralised to meet the efficient requirements of a modern technological society. Each must move towards a better modus (with or without electronic entrepreneurs). Both countries might have pursued their separate misdirections for ever, perhaps, if it were not for the overwhelming fact that they are competing for the privilege of designing future social life for the planet Earth (at least), and cannot accomplish much in this regard by military means. As it is, neither can suffer an advantage to the other in this grand project.

The super-issue for both countries is how to manage technology—to maintain its existence and its growth, and to control its intolerable effects. But in each country different ideological rags and tatters (along with the underlying élite prerogatives and precedents) inhibit, frustrate, misdirect, etc., almost any effort to deal with this super-issue. But since it is literally a life-and-death super-issue, it must be confronted at whatever ideological cost. And as long as we remain alive, it will be—by definition. And we are, out of our defined desire to live, so confronting it in America.

Which brings us to "thesis 2," which Mr. Wiles terms "a watered-down version of the Managerial Revolution." In his hands, it is a sugared-over version, so that as the reader mentally responds No to the implied question of whether a managerial effect is good, he finds out a paragraph or two later that he is committed to the view that managerialism didn't happen or isn't important. This is a helluva way to referee a rugby match!

Managerialism is neither "a self-conscious new class about to seize power in a definite way" nor merely "the onset of a reasonable professionalism," as Mr. Wiles variously suggests. It is a profoundly total alteration in society, both producing and deriving from the most thoroughgoing changes in the historical forms of property and power, and it is comparable only to the immense process by which bourgeois power replaced feudal power in Europe. In a phrase, it is latter-day industrialism. It assumes that industrialism is a bigger historical movement than capitalism; that in fact the former can swallow the latter whole (and consequently undigested); that it creates and is created by a new class different from and more important than the class of property-owning capitalists; and that all this takes place "out there" rather than on a drawing-board, with the consequence that not only drawing-board specialists but also the people most directly involved may not know what is happening. The fact that some ex-socialists chose to see one aspect of

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the class development, and the Harvard Business School another, is interesting but not all that important. Unless one is interested in current ideological fluff instead of the managerial revolution.

And I am afraid that ideology is about all that Mr. Wiles is interested in. That is the key to his article. His basic feeling seems to be that no wind on the horizon is about to blow it—ideology—away, and *therefore* we need not look very hard for or at the similarities between Russia and America or the historical role these may play. The ideology that informs the author's feeling for ideology appears in this: "The mere possibility of 'managerialisation' is so new in human affairs that it is dangerous to generalise about it." And at least as dangerous, Mr. Wiles, *not* to.

Is it possible that Mr. Wiles is concerned more about convergence of ideology, even official ideology, than about that existence and recognition of similarities (he calls it "convergence") which can help bring about the kind of liveable deal that can be lived up to—which is all we can dare hope for in these parlous existential days? Such ideological convergence would be a world cultural disaster comparable only to the Bomb itself. The avoidance of it is the better part of *our* reason for continuing the cold war.

CONVERGENCE-TO-IDENTITY, ideologically conceived —that is Mr. Wiles' mistake. It appears as well in his discussion of consumption, his thesis 3, in the proposition—Jazz is not enough. I suppose so. And besides, he says, the Communists are socialising consumption, and—it's news to me—Madison Avenue is not. On this matter of consumption, the point again—praise be God—is not sameness but similar fatness, on the presumption that hungry people fight harder. We do not have to live in Russian houses to live in the world with the Russians. But if all the Russians have houses, albeit not split-levels, they will have such a heightened appreciation of their common interest with other people who also have houses, that they will not blow up the world of well-housed people. Moreover, we Americans bought little European cars and maybe we will even learn something from the Russians about consumption when they have something to teach us.

Convergence, indeed! It is a false issue argued by three straw men. And—wouldn't you know it—in his final paragraphs, just when it's too late, Mr. Wiles starts to get down to business. He says, for example, that to deal with our immediate technological future "international inspection must have such powers as to be world government." Of course! But world government will not come off drawing-boards—it will *be* a series of agreements between Russia and the United States. And one day there will be so many of them or so many of them will be recognised for what they are, that the drawing-board fellows will finally notice that they are world government and will then get busy on their drawing-boards demonstrating how it should have been done. That the day should come!

Meanwhile, we had better not be dissuaded by Mr. Wiles from continuing to think about the existing and predictable similarities between Russia and

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the United States which will play a part in the creation of these agreements. And we might as well abandon the convergence-to-identity theme, because contra that is the big reason we have not taken the easier, more tempting road to agreement —unilateral convergence.

David T. Bazelon

A Rejoinder

I SHALL PASS over Mr. Bazelon's first 3½ paragraphs, which are the merest limbering up. Most of the rest of his comment makes essentially one point: there is one best way of running an industrial, managerial society; as it is more centralised than the American way and less centralised than the Soviet, competition will force both nations to adopt this one way.

For reasons given in my article, and illustrated with examples, I believe that there is no one best way to run a modern society, nor only one type of manager or managerialisation. Mr. Bazelon shows a remarkable aversion from brass tacks in failing to mention all this argumentation. Moreover U.S.-Soviet competition is *motivated* by the pursuit of different ways: so that if it is at all practicable to continue this pursuit we must expect it.

Let us get down to these brass tacks. Does Mr. Bazelon expect to see U.S. agriculture given over to state farms about ten times as big as the biggest 4 per cent in U.S.A.? Does he expect to see a stock exchange in Moscow? Does he expect all housing in New York to be rent-free? Does he expect the Soviet government to abandon its legal powers to give direct physical production orders? Are the means of production to be publicly owned in U.S.A. or privately owned in U.S.S.R.? Just what *concretely* is this unifying vision?

This lack of practical detail in his picture makes it ironical that he should accuse me of too much ideology, or invoke in his favour the facts "out there" against my "drawing-board." Thus he says Madison Avenue is socialising consumption. This is a frivolous equivocation. Is it really necessary to point out that Madison Avenue is on the contrary encouraging more and more private consumption?

The same disinterest in fact emerges very strongly from the suggestion that there is no free market in U.S.A. But of course there is—if not, what else is there? "The United States is a corporate economy": what does that *mean*?—only that the enterprises in the market are large, often monopolistic, and run by managers. The market is still, of course, there—it has not been replaced, nor begun to look like being replaced, by government instructions. "Decisively underwritten by the government": what does that *mean*?—only that the government is now a major actor in the market, *buying and selling freely like any corporation*, and that the budget deficit keeps demand high, so that supply is nearer to full employment. One must indeed eschew the rigorous analysis of detail in order to see in this the approach of even a decentralised Communist command economy. The role of the federal government was not much different under Alexander Hamilton. Can Mr. Bazelon conceivably be confusing the welfare state, or anti-trust, or farm price support, or Keynesian fiscal policy, with central planning and public ownership?

One may sum this up by one sentence: the End of Laissez-Faire and the Death of Stalin do not spell Convergence. It is sloppy thinking to equate the abandonment of lunatic extremes with an inevitable march toward the middle, and sloppy thinking to equate the latter with peace and friendship.

AND YET A THESIS not proven may still be right. Loose reasoning and the irresponsible use of words may merely blind us to its fundamental validity. It further behoves the Sovietologist to remember that he has a vested interest in non-convergence, and must watch his own emotions. Competition does make people similar. In defence and foreign policy there *is convergence*. The influence of mere atomic terror I myself stressed, and the aftermath of Cuba has so far justified this prophecy. But there is more than that. Both super-powers are hostile to the spread of atomic weapons among their allies. Both want to unify these allies' economies. Both give economic aid to neutrals. In these two last cases, furthermore, Soviet policy is a competitive imitation of U.S. policy, in exact accordance with Mr. Bazelon's thesis. The improvement in U.S. high school education since *Sputnik* is similarly imitative; and when in 1958 Khrushchev's hare-brained schemes bid fair to ruin Soviet technical education there arose a Soviet "Admiral Rickover" to insist on high technical standards—Academician Nesmeyanov. No doubt behind the scenes he used the same defence arguments that Admiral Rickover uses in public.

But still as concerns liberal education, religion, the role of the family, training for citizenship, etc., I see no particular convergence, but indeed in many places divergence. Nor do I regard the Managerial Revolution itself as a *deus ex machina*; still less accept that "if all the Russians have houses... they will not blow up the world of well-housed people." Come, come, Mr. Bazelon, are your Air Force colonels ill-housed? Is Goldwater? Is Suslov? Was Hitler?

Peter Wiles

INDEX TO VOLUME XX

The Index to Volume XX (January–June, 1963) is now available and will be sent, free of charge, on application to ENCOUNTER, 25 Haymarket, London, S.W.1. Standing orders for future indexes can also be accepted.

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Our Northern Manichee

By John Bayley

LIKE PUSHKIN OR DRYDEN, AUDEN is a wonder, a marvellous writer, and also a friendly one. He combines extreme technical virtuosity with a simple forthcomingness. He is the most entertaining and interesting figure in Anglo-American literature to-day, and unlike much of it he is not easily allotted or contained. The best rune or signet-word I can think of to carve on him is, unexpectedly, "Freedom." (*Freiheit* perhaps, not *Liberté*, for he is linguistically very discriminating, even though as a good American he has learnt to live with *liberty* as with *home* and *toilet*.) He swims the sea far away from land; his new collection of essays[1] had the right to a title out of Shakespeare, and he himself writes about Shakespeare in—if it isn't absurd to say so—a freedom most writers of his age have lost, imprisoned in their guarded modes of being good or bad, in what they can do and what they have managed to be. Is there any poet of the last hundred years who has been so consistently *interesting*? In whatever form he chooses to write he makes poets, political commentators, psychologists and theologians alike seem specialised bores. If one were doing him a testimonial for an academic post one would dwell on his ability to capture and hold the attention of every kind of boy, and to teach everything from scoutcraft to civics. And Mr. Auden, one would add, will also be happy to run a course for aspiring bards. Hebrew or Greek would be needed for this, and thousands of lines of poetry should be learnt by heart. Though the student is forbidden to read literary criticism he must take courses in prosody, rhetoric, mythology, philology, geology, and cooking. He must also garden and keep a domestic animal.

This may strike us as of predictable and limited appeal, and certainly Auden is not without such displays and crotchets, all the jocose paraphernalia of the big man of English letters. But nothing he says leads to a dead end or round in a circle; his sentences are rides, never impasses. And he is never a bore. One's heart never sinks at the reintroduction of a favourite topic, because these with him are never portentous stand-bys, Shamanistic self-advertisements, substitutes for further thought or imperious warnings off it. His prose is naturally gnomic: its precision is never self-satisfied and French. The tow-haired northern apothegms mount up in a pile, like axe-helves carpentered by some crippled Viking in a forest full of witches and blueberries, ready for us to balance and make use of if we wish. He is a kind of Loki with words, immensely skilful and yet open-handed.

YET IN ADDITION to all this northern sense and homeliness Auden has always been a literary manichee. Continually he stresses the freedom and unreality of art as against the determinist imperatives of life, just as he has stressed the dualism between words as objects of play and craft, and as ways of realising meaning and feeling. He loves to divide the world in two; into Eden and the New Jerusalem, or Dingley Dell and the Fleet Prison, or the world of Alice and the world of Mabel (a rather tiresome and Oxonian distinction), or into talent and morality—what we may do and what we must do.[2] This preoccupation is not unlike that of the old-fashioned aesthete with "art" and "life", and has the same weakness of imposing a willed simplicity over a very complex area. But it leads to firmness and clarity, never to confusion—it is always a pleasure to know where

[1] *The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays*. By W. H. AUDEN. Faber, 42s.

[2] "To witness an immoral act, like a man beating his wife, makes a spectator angry or unhappy. To witness an untalented act, like a clumsy man wrestling with a piece of bad sculpture, makes him laugh." (*The Frivolous and The Earnest*). But a brilliant account in a novel of a man beating his wife clumsily might make us both upset and amused. Does Auden perhaps distrust the novel as a possible solvent of his dichotomy?

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one is with Auden—and also to a forthrightness of moral judgment that would have pleased Dr. Johnson and should even satisfy Dr. Leavis. Here is his verdict on two poets who

> endow the gratuitous with a magical utility of its own, so that a poet comes to think of himself as the god who creates his subjective universe out of nothing. Mallarmé, who planned to write the sacred book of a new universal religion, and Rilke, with his notion of *Gesang ist Dasein* . . . both were geniuses, but admire them as one may and must, one's final impression of their work is of something false and unreal.

But the obverse of the severity is a delightful and charitable tolerance. Perhaps because he believes that literature is less important than life, and need therefore not be taken so seriously, he is usually far more illuminating about it than those who take it very seriously indeed.

One aspect of his tolerance is his benign indifference to personality—he makes one realise that most critics, though they may pretend not to, usually slate an author just because he is the kind of fellow they dislike. One would expect Auden to dislike Lawrence, and all he stands for, and yet the essay on his poetry is one of the most enthusiastic and discerning in the book. It also shows the utility of Auden's methods. He quotes the preface to *Pansies,* in which Lawrence inveighs against the "bullying" quality of prose thoughts, which "irritate us by their assertiveness and would not nag if put in poetry."

> Though I personally love good prose aphorisms I can see what Lawrence means. If one compares *"Plus ça change, plus c'est la méme chose"* with
>
> *The accursed power that stands on Privilege*
> *And goes with women and champagne and bridge*
> *Broke, and Democracy resumed her reign*
> *That goes with bridge and women and champagne.*
>
> the first does seem a bit smug and a bit abstract, while, in the second, the language dances and is happy.
>
> *The bourgeois produced the Bolshevist inevitably*
> *As every half-truth at length produces the contradiction of itself*
> *In the opposite half-truth.*
>
> This has the worst of both worlds; it lacks the conciseness of the prose and the jollity of the rhymed verse.

The worst of both worlds indeed. Auden has already told us in another essay that in a poem he looks at the "contraption" and "for what sort of guy is inside it." Is it because the contraption is so feeble here that Lawrence inside it only seems to be flicking at us querulously with a damp dishcloth? Auden suggests this when he goes on to admire the best of Lawrence's "doggerel."

> If formal verse can be likened to carving, free verse to modelling, then one might say that doggerel verse is like *objets trouvés*—the piece of driftwood that looks like a witch, the stone that has a profile. The writer of doggerel, as it were, takes any old words, rhythms, and rhymes that come into his head, gives them a good shake and then throws them on to the page like dice, where, contrary to all probability they make sense, not by law but by chance.

Lawrence's *personality* is significantly omitted from this charming analogy. The implication is that the guy inside, even if he is Lawrence, will only be worth knowing if he has hit on the right contraption, if the pieces have arranged themselves in the right order. Even where Lawrence is concerned, Auden insists on the principle of making before saying, and will not have it that the two can appear so naturally to be one that we need not concern ourselves with the dualism.

IS THERE, has there always been with Auden, something defensive about this emphasis on a poetic dualism? He is convinced that the contraption-maker, the contraptor, is always more likely to be interesting, entertaining, not boring, than the poet to whom the dualism doesn't occur. But in retaining the consciousness of self and audience that means we shall not be bored, the dualism-conscious poet is also haunted by the knowledge of his stasis, his gestures at us from behind glass, his inability to move us. In *The Sea and The Mirror* Auden made Caliban state this dilemma with Jamesian finesse.

> The poet is doomed to fail the more he succeeds . . . the more he strengthens your delusion that an awareness of the gap is itself a bridge . . . so that your dialogue, using his words, becomes the one activity which never, like devouring or collecting or spending, lets you down, the one game which can be guaranteed, whatever the company, to catch on.

How he loves gaps! Still using the mythology of *The Tempest,* he distinguishes to-day between Ariel-dominated and Prospero-dominated poetry, and Ariel's other name, he very significantly suggests, is Narcissus.

> The Grecian Urn [*not* Keats, as he reminds us] states Ariel's position; Prospero's has been stated by Dr. Johnson: *The only end of writing is to enable the readers better to enjoy life or better to endure it.* We want a poem to be beautiful, that is to say a verbal earthly paradise, a timeless world of pure play, which gives us delight precisely because of its contrast to historical existence . . . at the same time we want a poem

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> to be true, to provide us with some kind of revelation about our life which will show us what life is really like and free us from self-enchantment and deception . . . it is usually possible to say of a poem, and sometimes of the whole output of a poet, that it is Ariel-dominated or Prospero-dominated.

He gives Peele's "Bathsabe's Song" as an example of Ariel, and Frost's *The Middleness of the Road* as one of Prospero, "for in it is an experience which preceded any words . . . the purpose of the poem is to define that experience and draw wisdom from it . . . though the beautiful verbal element is not absent, it is subordinate in importance to the truth of what the poem says."

It seems a sound distinction, but there is a flaw in it, for Auden's Caliban knows that "the truth of what it says" is merely that perfect, that helpless and Narcissistic truth which will never let us down because we are never going to do anything about it. Frost, in fact, seems to me a contraptor of the first order, and the selection of him as a Prospero poet would seem to confuse the new dualistic formulation *unless* (on reflection quite likely?) both Ariel *and* Prospero are assumed to be imprisoned in the mirror-world of art which Caliban described, the world of

> *Halcyon structures which are useful*
> *As structures go—though not to be confused*
> *With anything really important.*

For otherwise there does seem to be discrepancy here. Caliban knew that truth and meaning were *a part* of making, a part of the Narcissistic play. Auden is beautifully aware of Frost.

> Like Gray, Frost has written a poem on a deserted graveyard. Gray is concerned with the possible lives of the unknown dead; the past is more imaginatively exciting to him than the present. . . . But Frost does not try to remember anything; what moves him is that death, which is always a present terror, is no longer present here, having moved on like a pioneer.
>
> *It would be easy to be clever*
> *And tell the stones: men hate to die.*
> *And have stopped dying now for ever.*
> *I think they would believe the lie.*

But he must know that when a poet says it would be easy to be clever, clever and "conceited" is what he is going to be. Frost's not altogether disarming modesty is as resoundingly, though less straightforwardly artful than "the storied urn or animated bust." I resent him as Prospero; for something both virtuoso and moving I would much rather have Auden himself.

> *. . . those clearings where the shy humiliations*
> *Gambol on sunny afternoons, the waterhole to which*
> *The scarred rogue sorrow comes quietly in the small hours.*

That delights us by its cleverness and then moves us by what it says: the two do not, as in Frost, apologise for one another. But though it does move us, I think Auden is quite right to play down that word in his critical vocabulary: he distrusts poets who have the desire and the intention to move. Auden is like Shakespeare in his freedom as a contraptor, in the sense in which both are entirely agile in art and totally emancipated (because we know nothing of their inner life and real feelings) from the conditions of life. All his work is timeless, completed, like a fairy story; while all Lawrence's, say, strikes us by contrast as perpetually *going on*, like some visually rather disagreeable form of protein. Yet what Auden says of Shakespeare is also true of himself; their "verbal operas" "provide unending food for thought, if one cares to think about them."[3] Their superb structures, because finished and hung in the mirror-world, are thoughtless, but they are the reason why thought is in others. Of course Shakespeare moves us, yes, but not in the way we often assume, and not in the straight way he moves foreigners (e.g., Simone Weil) for whom his contraptive marvels are largely nullified by the language barrier. Was it for nothing, too, that Tolstoy so much disliked King Lear, in which he must have detected Ariel at his most inspired, and for our reception of which Caliban might fairly reserve his most corrosive chuckle?

Does the "phony" in art result from an uneasy relation of Ariel to Prospero? The writer who cares nothing for the dualism may be exceedingly tiresome and boring but can hardly be phony: one may compare Lawrence to protein but it makes no sense to speak of phony protein.[4] Auden believes, I take it, that the freedom of art depends on the artist knowing it is not "real," and hence that the artist's freedom to be artificial is also his freedom to be phony. "When Yeats assures me, in a stanza of the utmost magnificence, that after death he wants to be-

[3] See his very significant remarks on Shaw. "He has told us that it was from *Don Giovanni* that he learned 'how to write seriously without being dull' . . . his writing has an effect nearer to that of music than most of those who have claimed to be writing "dramas of feeling." His plays are a joy to watch, not because they purport to deal with social and political problems, but because they are such wonderful displays of conspicuous waste; the conversational energy displayed by his characters is so far in excess of what their situation requires that, if it were to be devoted to practical action, it would wreck the world in five minutes." (*The Shakespearian City.*)

[4] Unless parts of *The Naked Lunch* could be called that.

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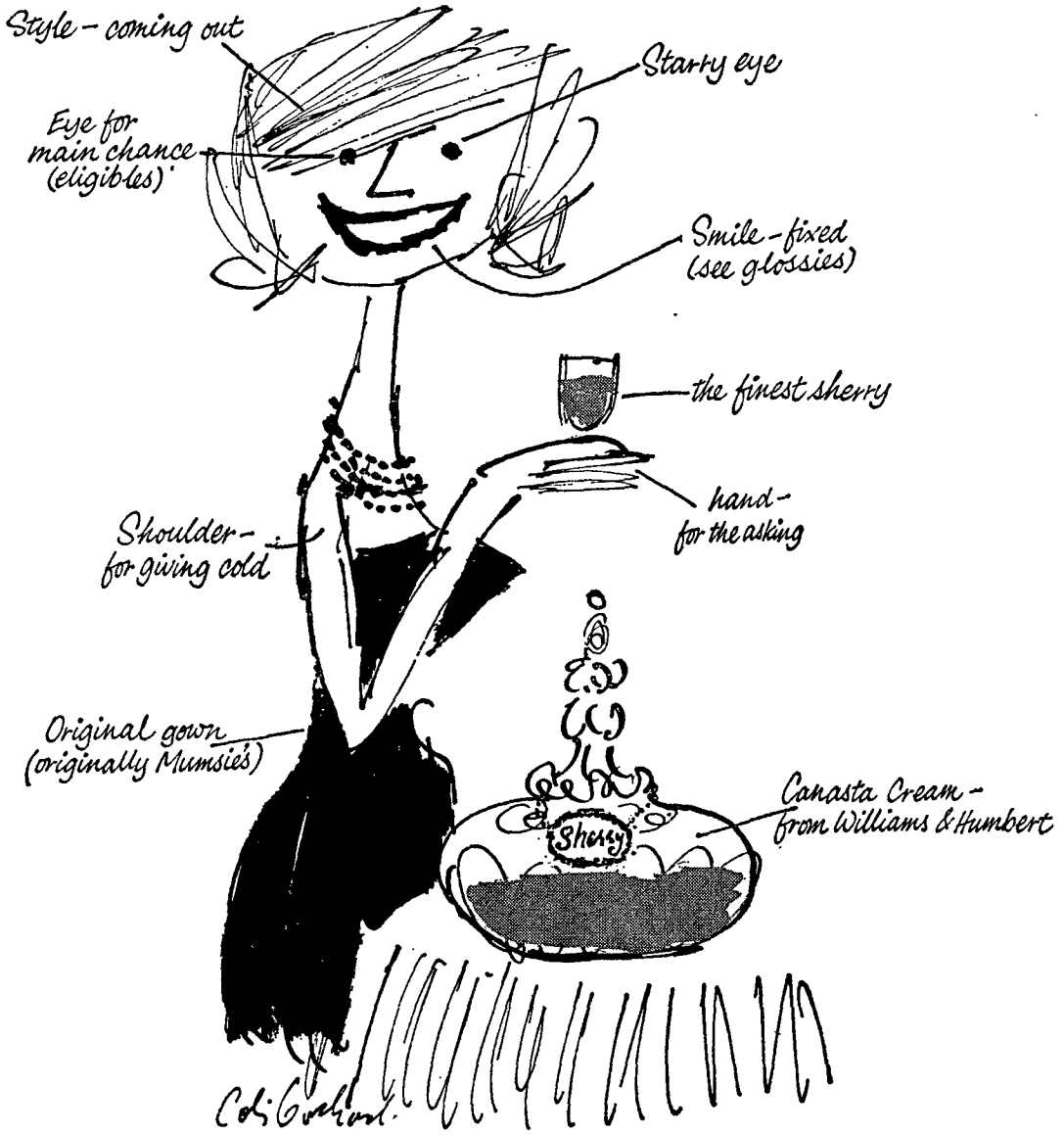

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come a mechanical bird, I feel that he is telling what my nanny would have called a story." But doesn't he lose sight of this when he compares these three epitaphs?

HARDY
I never cared for life, life cared for me.
And hence I owe it some fidelity . . .

YEATS
Cast a cold eye
On life, on death.[5]
Horseman, pass by!

FROST
I would have written of me on my stone
I had a lover's quarrel with the world.

Of the three, Frost, surely, comes off best. Hardy seems to be stating the Pessimist's Case rather than his real feelings. I never cared . . . Never? Now Mr. Hardy, really! Yeats's horseman is a stage prop; the passerby is much more likely to be a motorist. But Frost convinces me that he is telling neither more nor less than the truth about himself. And when it comes to wisdom, is not having a lover's quarrel with life more worthy of Prospero than not caring or looking coldly?

Surely in all these artful contrivances there is no question of telling the truth about oneself? The Elizabethans held "the truest poetry the most feigning," and Auden appears to have suffered here an odd attack of Wordsworthianism, though it is certainly true that Frost's is the most *interesting*, can be reflected on the most, and hence is *perhaps* the best of the examples. But both Ariel and Prospero are conscious all the time of what they are up to, and so is Frost, and is this consciousness compatible with telling the truth about oneself? In fact it is Hardy who in general cannot help being himself, who is unaware of putting on or not putting on a *persona*, but Auden seems to turn a blind eye to the large area of literature which has this unawareness. He would divide us all—as he put it in *The Age of Anxiety*—into "the sane who know they are acting and the mad who do not," so that Ariel and Prospero are both actors.

OF COURSE VIRTUE is not all on Prospero's side. Though Ariel can be phony with impunity he has not the freedom to be personally bad, and if he is virtuous his performance will be all the better for it.

> Marianne Moore's poems are an example of the kind of art which is not as common as it should be; they delight, not only because they are intelligent, sensitive and beautifully written, but also because they convince the reader that they have been written by someone who is personally good.

Absolutely. Ditto with Frost and with Auden himself. And this virtue depends upon sanity and proportion; upon keeping art in its place; upon knowing that "culture is one of Caesar's things", upon modesty and humility above all, the qualities that Auden reveres in Bertie Wooster and the absence of which he censures in Rilke or Wagner. He associates these virtues above all with tradition, and with what he calls *Romanitas,* "upon which Europe was founded and which she has not ceased attempting to preserve," but which has never been accepted in America.

> The fundamental presupposition of *Romanitas,* secular or sacred, is that virtue is prior to liberty, i.e. what matters most is that people should think and act rightly; of course it is preferable they should do so consciously of their own free will, but if they cannot or will not, they must be made to, the majority by the spiritual pressure of education and tradition, the minority by physical coercion, for liberty to act wrongly is not liberty but licence. The antagonistic presupposition . . . for which America has come symbolically to stand, is that liberty is prior to virtue, i.e. liberty cannot be distinguished from licence. (*The American Scene.*)

Virtue comes before liberty, as, in art, the ability to make is more important than the desire to say. Auden's ethic and æsthetic views follow logically from the same conviction. You must obey the rules before you can understand why they should be obeyed. The craftsman can only become free by submitting to the laws of his craft, but if liberty is not distinguished from licence the writer's impulse must be: I am free, therefore I am true and interesting; I am me, therefore ditto—the premise, in fact, upon which rests the modern American novel. Auden's silence about novels (except those of Jane Austen and Henry James) is presumably the silence of charity: one hardly dares to think what he must feel about Wolfe, Miller, or Kerouac.

But though evidently no novel reader he adores fairy and detective stories, pointing out in an essay called *The Guilty Vicarage* that fidelity to a convention determines the success of their effect. Yet haven't Hammett and Chandler queried that convention with good results? (Come to that, hasn't the American Novel queried the European convention with—well—important and interesting results?) Auden evades the issue by calling Chandler's novels "serious studies of a criminal milieu, The Great Wrong Place." and finds them "powerful and depressing"—surely a bizarre judgment? Chandler's novels strike me as having all the

[5] Quoted incorrectly in the essay as *On life and death.*

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choice frivolity of high convention, though they are perhaps based more on the *nostalgia* for an old convention than the actual thing—Auden has himself wonderfully conveyed the use Americans make of such nostalgias in his portrait of Rosetta in *The Age of Anxiety*, to whom Ariel brings day-dreams of great houses "familiar to all readers of English detective stories." High convention is his strong point. *Pale Fire*, it might be said, was a fœtus in the womb of the *New Year Letter*.

Auden says: "Obey the rules," and if we ask what these are he would tell us that we know quite well. So indeed, we might reflect in a rather dazed way, we do. This romantic conservatism unites him with, amongst others, Langland and C. S. Lewis. Yet one must beware of stressing too much his tendency to simplify things. He is not (as I may have given the impression) in love with *Romanitas*. On the contrary, he can see its dangers very clearly indeed.

> The possibility that De Tocqueville saw from an inspection of America in 1830 has become a dreadful reality in the Europe of to-day, namely, that *Romanitas* is perfectly capable of adapting itself to an egalitarian and untraditional society; it can even drop absolute values and replace the priest by the social engineer without violating its essential nature (which is and always was not Christian but Manichean). And it was from America, the first egalitarian society, that it learned how to adapt itself. It took the technique of mass-advertising . . . and changed the sales object from breakfast foods to political passions; it took the egalitarian substitute for tradition—fashion—and translated it . . . to the selling of a party line; it took the extra-legal vigilantes and put them into uniforms; it took the inert evil of race prejudice and made it a dynamic evil.

One is fed up to-day with pronouncements by celebrities on matters outside their sphere—Bishop's views on sex, or Band Leader on disarmament—but I could listen all day to a poet on these and other questions if the poet were Auden.

WHEN I SAID that Auden writes about Shakespeare in a Shakespearean way I meant that he writes about Shakespeare as if he were *not* Shakespeare, or could possibly be Shakespeare, and this—surprisingly enough—is the rarest of virtues among critics of the Bard. Auden's own comment on the average critic shows why. "For him a poem is not a work of art by someone else; it is his own discovered document." And he has remarked elsewhere, less severely, that Shakespeare critics tell us much about themselves but little about Shakespeare. Mr. Wilson Knight, that is to say, has discovered that his own parabolic vision of the

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Renaissance was put by Shakespeare into *Timon of Athens*; Lytton Strachey found that his own lack of interest in the actual material of the plays was obligingly felt by Shakespeare himself in the last three, and so on. Superficially it might seem that Auden does the same thing. He gives us a saintly and unworldly Falstaff, almost a suffering sinner; and a *Merchant of Venice* which equates usury and sodomy and contrasts both (real life perhaps?) with the Eden of Belmont from which the virgin Portia comes down to do a good deed in the world. But there is a crucial difference between Auden and most fantasy critics. He is taking Shakespeare as his text for an absorbing sermon; his own theory recognises that Ariel's work of art has nothing to do with "the unending food for thought if one cares to think about it" which it supplies for Prospero. Auden, in fact, does not *really* believe that what he says has any literal equivalent in the plays, and so we have freedom again, wisdom, interest, instead of the claustrophobic world of the critic who has discovered Shakespeare in himself. When he writes about the songs, the songs themselves remain inviolate: he writes as an expert operatic technician perceiving the impact of their timing as arias upon an ideal audience.

Only once is he wilful, and that is about *Othello*, a play about which all persons of character, from Rymer onwards, have been apt to take a strong line. Its peculiarity is that though the two main characters are open to the usual varieties of interpretation, the critic must none the less respect—much more rigorously than he need do elsewhere in Shakespeare—the astonishing, but slightly precarious structure, which Ariel has reared on the foundation of the old plot. In that plot the goodness and virtue of Desdemona are absolute, and Shakespeare keeps them so, because he must. If she be false, or could be false, then never mind about Heaven —the whole idea of the tragedy mocks itself. And so it is astonishing to find Auden regarding her with cool dislike as a silly and possibly loose girl who "given a few more years of Othello, might well, one feels, have taken a lover." Most searching critics are apt, involuntarily, to see the play through Iago's eyes, but this is to become Iago himself, and it is all the odder because in another context Auden has so accurately defined the nature of Iago.

> The Evil One is not interested in evil, for evil is, by definition, what he believes he already knows. He is only interested in good, as that which he has so far failed to understand in terms of his absolute presuppositions: goodness is his obsession.

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Because he wants to prove that it doesn't exist, and Auden, as we are well aware, knows it does. Since we are sure of that the gaffe hardly matters, and becomes indeed—like everything else in the book—something to be grateful for. Even when Prospero forgets his manichean creed and lays violent hands on Ariel's halcyon structure he never for a moment stops being interesting. And even when hugging one's insights to one's breast, one never feels quite easy with him, because he is probably aware of them already.

> Authors can be stupid enough, God knows, but they are not always quite so stupid as a certain kind of critic seems to think. The kind of critic to whom, when he condemns a passage, the possibility never occurs that its author may have foreseen exactly what he is going to say.

It is a salutary reminder. How few reviewers, he remarks, really feel that "Mr. A.'s work is more important than anything I can say about it." About him I should wish to be one of them.

Learning to Live with the *N.S. & N.*

By Irving Kristol

LET ME AT ONCE declare my bias: I am an old *Tribune* man.* It was around 1940, at a bookstall outside the reading room of the New York Public Library, that I discovered the existence of both *The New Statesman* and *Tribune*. As a young socialist, I was properly excited by this discovery: there wasn't much American reading matter for young socialists then (there still isn't, but that no longer concerns me), and both of these periodicals were incomparably superior to anything I had known. The back of *The New Statesman* quite dazzled me with its stylish sophistication; the front quite nauseated me with its unctuous pro-Soviet apologetics. *Tribune*, on the other hand, I found altogether admirable. It obviously wasn't nearly so *chic* as its competitor; but the candid and pointed contributions of George Orwell, Michael Foot, T. R. Fyvel, G. L. Arnold, Evelyn Anderson, Jon Kimche and others corresponded better to my idea of a socialist journal of opinion. When the fortunes of war landed me in London, I dutifully trotted round to the *Tribune* offices to pay my respects. Wild horses couldn't have dragged me near the *N.S. & N.*

Well, times change and people too. In the post-war years, *Tribune* decided that totalitarian socialism was generally better than none, whereas I decided that no socialism was, more often than not, better than some. The *N.S. & N.* itself hardly changed at all, but oddly enough, I came gradually to be possessed of a grudging respect for it. In part, this was because I was now reading it for professional reasons, and I had to admit that it was incontestably the most brilliantly edited magazine I had ever come across. In part, too, the editorial opinions were now so far removed from my own that I could be relatively detached about them. (Isn't it the case that it is members of the Labour Party who froth at the mouth over each issue of the *N.S. & N.*, while Tories—anticipating the worst, and not always finding it—placidly read on?) There was also an accidental circumstance: I subscribed to the surface mail edition, which arrived in New York three to four weeks after publication. By that time, the editorial opinions on current events could be read as an agreeable supplement to "This England."

SO I HAD LEARNED to live with *The New Statesman* even before I came to live in Britain, in 1953. In the decade since (half in London, half back in New York), I have become almost perversely fond of it. Since there are a great many people in the world who think and feel as the editors of the *New Statesman* do, it is doubtless a good thing that they are represented by a journal that is well-written, cultivated, frequently amusing, and not entirely predictable. Besides, the *N.S. & N.* is by now a venerable British Institution, and its ideology has something of that ivied charm which enables the British Travel Agency to urge tourists of the world to unite for a trip to the land where the unchanging past meets the ever-changing

* *New Statesmanship*, by EDWARD HYAMS. Longmans, 25s. *The New Statesman*, by EDWARD HYAMS. Longmans, 35s.

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present. There can be little doubt that the *N.S. & N.* has contributed its bit to helping solve the balance-of-payments problem; Americans in particular are pleased that, along with other antiquities, the socialist idea has been so nicely preserved in Britain. And it is therefore a genuine pleasure for me (as well as being a unique opportunity) to join Prime Minister Macmillan and President Kennedy in wishing the *N.S. & N.* a happy fiftieth birthday.

BUT I DO WISH it had celebrated the occasion less parsimoniously. The two volumes at hand remind one too much of those rationed meals that one was served in London restaurants under the censorious eyes of Stafford Cripps and Edith Summerskill, some fifteen years ago. They are, to begin with, inadequate in bulk. A proper history of the *N.S. & N.* should be a big book, a "life and times" on the grand scale, instead of the all-too-hurried survey this is. And a proper anthology from the first fifty years should be a documentary history of British socialist thought, rather than the collection of tid-bits—in alphabetical rather than chronological order, and as much "literary" as political—suitable for one evening's bedside browsing, which Mr. Edward Hyams has assembled.

In addition to being skimpy, these two volumes are just plain peculiar, so that one is being constantly provoked to inquire: what manner of nourishment is this? Mr. Hyams is most familiar to *N.S. & N.* readers for his frequent contributions on birds and bees and flowers, from a socialist point of view. He is also the author of fourteen novels and seven works of non-fiction (these latter, from their titles, pretty much in the birds-and-bees line). I admit that I have never read any of his books, and that even when I so much as glance at his articles they give me an acute attack of hay fever. He is obviously intelligent, and he writes always with vigour, occasionally with grace. But I should have thought his qualifications as a social historian were anything but self-evident. My guess is that his personal socialist hero is William Morris, the one British thinker who had no perceptible influence on 20th-century British socialism in general, or the *N.S. & N.* in particular. As heroes go, that's not such a bad choice; but it is undeniably an idiosyncratic one. Above all, the *N.S. & N.* has been—and this is its special editorial flair—alertly contemporary; Mr. Hyams is on the archaic side. One believes that he has read every issue of the *N.S. & N.*; one doubts he reads the newspapers. He even speaks approvingly of people as being "politically advanced"! And the level of his sophistication in politics and economics may be inferred from his assertion that Premier Khrushchev probably "borrowed the notion" of different national paths to socialism from the *N.S. & N.*, of which it seems he is a constant reader (in what language?).

MR. HYAMS HAS ALSO had the poor judgment (if great courage) to confront head-on the question of the *N.S. & N.*'s long flirtation with Communism, and to attempt to rationalise it. As an apologist, he is simply too honest for his own good. Thus, he quotes some classical specimens of what can only be called Kingsley Martinisms, of which the following, in 1952, is typical:

> Thirty-two lucky people, some Communists, some fellow-travellers, other sympathetic persons, have left by plane for Peking through Prague and Moscow. The opportunity is too good to miss and they will be able, we may be sure, to tell us about the feelings of liberation among common people now that the Kuomintang is gone, about an administrative honesty and efficiency never before known in China and about the great constructive work that is proceeding in industry and agriculture. But I hope they will not stop there. They must tell us what the Chinese say about the million and a half "enemies of the people" who, it is apparently admitted, have been executed since the revolution. Were these executions really necessary?

After such a text, what gloss availeth? It was this sort of thing that led George Orwell to say that the *N.S. & N.* had the mentality of a whore. Mr. Hyams indignantly rejects this accusation, and says (literally) that what the *N.S. & N.* had was the mentality of "a faithful and stupid wife." I myself think this is a fair enough statement of the case; the love affair with Communism was of too long duration to be satisfactorily explained either by sleepwalking or streetwalking. (Way back in 1934, H. G. Wells interviewed Stalin for the *N.S. & N.*, and declared: "I cannot yet appreciate what has been done in your country; I only arrived yesterday. But I have already seen the happy faces of healthy men and women....") But Mr. Hyams does not stop there. He must try to show why it was *reasonable* for the *N.S. & N.* (which means, in this connection, Kingsley Martin) to be a stupid and faithful wife. To his credit, he is not nearly equal to the assignment, but his efforts are annoying. It is not true that the *N.S. & N.* opposed military resistance to fascism except in an alliance with Russia because it believed that, without Russia, such resistance was militarily futile. The motivation was political, not military: only the presence of Russia could ensure that it would be a "genuinely

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anti-imperialist" war—to put it bluntly, the *N.S. & N.* thought that Stalin's Russia was worth fighting for, while Chamberlain's England and Daladier's France were not. Nor is it true that the *N.S. & N.*'s frequent fellow-travelling in the post-war period was a reaction to a raging "preventive war" fever in the United States; it wasn't a reaction to anything—by that time it was mere habit.

So industriously does Mr. Hyams work this apologetic vein, that he commits what he himself, surely, would elsewhere declare to be absurdities. Thus he writes:

> ... [Kingsley Martin] knew perfectly well that the imperialist states *would,* in fact, have liked to see the Communist government destroyed and would, had they dared and been able to indulge their real wishes, have gone to war with Russia. This knowledge could not but colour Martin's judgment of the Soviet Union for many years to come; he was bound to take the view, for example, that stories of the shocking behaviour of the Soviet Government might well be nothing but Capitalist propaganda; and he was quite right, they were. Any resemblance between these fictions, and the facts as subsequently revealed, is purely coincidental. [The italics are in the original, as is the upper-case "C" in "Capitalist."]

This is bad history and ineffectual sophistry. Britain's and France's "real wishes" in the 1930s were clearly to go to war with nobody at all; and one of the first of many conciliatory acts by the Roosevelt administration was to extend formal recognition to the Soviet régime. There were businessmen who regarded Soviet Communism as anathema; but the literature of the period is also chock-full of enthusiastic reports by visiting businessmen who thought that Stalinist discipline was just what those slothful Russians needed. (One such businessman became American Ambassador to the Soviet Union, and wrote a best-selling book called *Mission to Moscow.*) As for the exposés being nothing but "Capitalist propaganda," that is hardly a nice thing to say about so distinguished a *N.S. & N.* contributor as Malcolm Muggeridge, whose *Winter in Moscow,* published in 1934, is still well worth reading.

WHAT IS MOST IRKSOME about Mr. Hyams' excursion into apologetics is that it represents such a missed opportunity. The fate of the socialist idea in the 20th century is—intellectually, at least—the most important political event the West has experienced. The sterility of political thought and political philosophy in Britain to-day (and elsewhere too) is intimately linked with the sterility of socialism, for it was socialism that absorbed the noblest political aspirations and the most vigorous critical energies. What went wrong? How did the "Fellowship of the New Life" move via Fabianism into the varieties of managerialism represented by the Labour Party to-day? How did the uncommon ideal of fraternal love become transmuted into an all too common lust for power? Is this the sort of thing that happens when, instead of socialists creating socialism, you propose to have socialism creating socialists by governmental fiat? And does the authoritarian bias go back, perhaps, to the philosophical radicalism of the 18th century, which always had a weakness for any benevolent despot who introduced a "new order"? These and other questions arise naturally out of a contemplation of the fifty years of the *N.S. & N.*; one assumes that the editors and contributors have given them some thought; but Mr. Hyams shies away from the problematics of socialism as if they were inviolable private property.

Even so, there is a kind of *fin de siècle* mood that Mr. Hyams communicates. *His* magazine was Kingsley Martin's, and he is perceptibly cool towards its prospects under Mr. John Freeman, whose outlook is insufficiently evangelical, too close to the pragmatic, for his tastes. Whether his misgiving is well-grounded remains to be seen; though one fervently hopes it is.

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Cosmic Factors in Disease

by ARTHUR GUIRDHAM

Dr. Guirdham's belief is that much disease, both organic and mental, is due to a conflict between our personalities and the universal principle of life, a clash between the cosmos and our own chaotic selves.

"Penetrating and profound. Dr. Guirdham's point is that it is not enough now to treat stress disorders; they must be understood. The need is to remove the mask, read the message, interpret the protest; and to do this the doctor must switch his attention from diagnosing the agents of disease, viruses and germs, to trying to find why the patient was unable to control them—why, in some cases, he actually needed them." BRIAN INGLIS (*Queen*).

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Public Faeces

Lawrence Durrell and Henry Miller. A Private Correspondence. Edited by GEORGE WICKES. *Faber*, 35s.

HEREWITH the transactions, over 400 pages and twenty-five years, of a small but active mutual admiration society. It must be granted that this is not a case of you-scratch-my-back-and-I'll-scratch-yours. For the partners are quite disinterested; they are utterly sincere, alas. It can only be supposed that ungrateful Messrs. Faber have some enormous grudge against the two of them, since the making public of this "private correspondence" will hardly enhance the reputations which they have so painstakingly built up with the collaboration of an unnerved and gullible international public. Even gullibility, even international gullibility, has its limits.

The correspondence opens in August, 1935, with a fan-letter from Durrell. *Tropic of Cancer*, recently published, "strikes me as being the only really man-size piece of work which this century can really boast of.... It's the final copy of all those feeble, smudgy, rough drafts—*Chatterley*, *Ulysses*, *Tarr*, etc." The outburst has the captivating enthusiasm of youth: Durrell was only twenty-three. Miller's reply is short and to the point. "I particularly prize your letter because it's the kind of letter I would have written myself had I not been the author of the book." Miller was only forty-three. Durrell then confesses to being a writer himself, and Miller asks, "Why don't you send me something of yours so that I can return some of the audacious compliments you pay me?" Which shows a nice nature. A little later Durrell takes off "a Britisher of the old flag-waving type... quite nice but thick in the attic," who has borrowed *Tropic of Cancer* and doesn't object to "the fellah consorting with buggahs, and all that," but draws the line at his pinching things from whores. Interesting, that. It had always struck me that for the uncensorious reader this episode might well be the only one which would stick in the mind—or the gullet.

Miller claims to feel like a Chinaman. "I'm nuts about China." And this is the prelude to a good deal of wishful-orientalism on both sides, until Durrell lashes out at Zennery in 1958. Similarly, an early portentousness on Durrell's side—"I AM SLOWLY BUT VERY CAREFULLY AND WITHOUT CONSCIOUS THOUGHT DESTROYING TIME"—looks forward to *The Alexandria Quartet*. A little later and Miller is writing a huge book on *Hamlet* but can't bring himself to read Shakespeare's version and asks Durrell to "give me the low-down on it." He writes to T. S. Eliot (a minor but engaging character in this correspondence) to tell him about Durrell, but complains that "he seems to treat me very gingerly and cavalierly." Throughout their relationship each does his utmost to help the other along: in these early years Miller goes to enormous trouble to launch his young friend: so much is unequivocally impressive.

Durrell sends Miller a prose poem and enables him to return an audacious compliment. "This puts you in a class with Léon-Paul Fargue. It's far superior to Breton or to Dylan Thomas.... You're a stinking genius!" Durrell's grateful reply, in which he mentions that he is working on *The Black Book*, "a chronicle of the English Death," is rather nicely signed, "Derivatively yours." This is not unduly modest, since in the next letter he seems to be rating Miller higher than Shakespeare. This document Miller describes as "the finest letter I ever received in my life."

In March, 1937, Miller receives the manuscript of *The Black Book* and is immediately transported. "You are *the* master of the English language.... This is way beyond Lawrence and the whole tribe.... It's like the Black Death, by Jesus. I'm stunned. My only adverse reaction is that it's too colossally colossal." We do not feel, here or elsewhere, the slightest doubt as to the genuineness of Miller's admiration: it makes for more palatable reading than Durrell's own admiration for *The Black Book*: "I like it, frankly.... I think it's a book Huxley could have written if he were a mixture of Lawrence and Shakespeare," though the critic in him admits that "the affectations and literary flapdoodle stick a bit." When (despite or because of Eliot's personal admiration for it) Fabers want *The Black Book* expurgated, Durrell is thinking of capitulating, but *Vade retro, Satanas!* Miller warns him sternly in one of his best letters. *The Black Book* is published in Paris the following year. Miller continues to rhapsodise over *The Black Book*. Apparently it isn't too arty for his tastes; what he seems to admire most in it is such phrase-making as "we can send out to the clitoris for an ice" (*cf.*, *Tropic of Cancer*, "I will bite into your clitoris and spit out two franc pieces").

References in Durrell's letters of 1944 look forward to *The Alexandria Quartet*. "The Alexandrian way of death is very Proustian and slow... one has never had anything lovelier and emptier than an Alexandrian girl. Their very emptiness is a caress. Imagine making love to a vacuum." (Yet he imagined it through four long volumes.) He meets a woman who provides him with a lot of material about "the inside of Egypt" which is to come in very useful; rather ungallantly he describes her as "*Tropic of Capri-*

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corn walking." Alexandria, he informs Miller, is rich in "sexual provender of quality." "It's funny the way you get woman after woman; and exactly what it adds up to I don't know...." In this case it added up to that world-beater *The Alexandria Quartet*, which Durrell announces a little later: "I have a wonderful idea for a novel on Alexandria, a nexus for all news of Greece, side by side with a sort of spiritual butcher's shop with girls on slabs." The Alexandrian "Book of the Dead" is to be more exotic than our English dead.

In 1946 Miller reports a meeting with Frieda Lawrence. "We get on famously. She said to me once, 'If only Lawrence had known you when alive. You would have been the very friend he was looking for.'" He adds in parenthesis, "I wonder." Three years later Miller remarks of an essay on him which Durrell has written for *Horizon*, "Merlin, you say somewhere. Mais, c'est vous! If anyone can seduce, drug, exalt the English, it is you." Prophetic, indeed, though not quite in the way intended. But Durrell is unable to return the compliment when *Sexus* comes out: the mysticism is fine but it is lost "in this shower of lavatory filth which no longer seems tonic and bracing, but just excrementitious and sad." It is Durrell who has changed, not Miller or Miller's work. Yet, however strongly one agrees with Durrell's onslaught, one has to admit that Miller's reply is (and especially in view of the history of their relationship) magnificently dignified, and by far the most moving document in this collection. Even the hostile reader is glad to see Durrell recanting immediately, in a cable which crosses with Miller's letter. Unhappily the running commentary supplied by the editor, vulgar throughout, gets particularly excited at this juncture and rather mars the effect in advance: "But Miller's magnanimity is equal to Durrell's candour. What might have been a crisis proves a climax...."

As the commentary informs us, Miller is "full of wonder and admiration and amazement" when *Justine* appears in early 1957. Durrell confirms that the novel "has had a tremendous press in England—rather a worried plaintive note from the dovecots where our literary men drowse but enthusiastic withal." The second volume reminds Miller of Valéry, "those æsthetico-religious-metaphysical speculations especially. I'll say this, there is nothing like this *Justine* in all English literature—what I know of it, at any rate." The two cannot agree over Kerouac, however. "Good, very good, surpassingly good," says Miller, but Durrell is clear-headed and firm about Kerouac's attitudinising. The editor interrupts again, to tell us that "the entire correspondence describes a perfect arc, beginning with Durrell's fan-letters and ending with Miller's. Now it is Miller's turn to acclaim Durrell as the Master..." and the correspondence comes to a halt with a long, lively, chatty and amiable letter from Big Sur dated October 31st, 1959.

THE INCREASING DISSIMILARITIES between the two correspondents emerge fairly clearly as the book unfolds. Durrell is changing, sobering up, while Miller remains exactly the same, self-intoxicated. In general, the one is strong where the other is weak. Miller has had a hard time, he has the right to complain, much more cause than has Durrell, who in fact complains more. Miller is a man of principle: he will not compromise with publishers or laws. Likeable if exasperating, he is a naïve and generous being. Durrell shows more willingness to compromise—the need is less on his side—and does not strike us as in the least naïve. Unlike his friend, he is critical, he has doubts and he voices them: we gather that he had doubts about publishing his own contributions to this correspondence. There is more to Durrell, we feel, than appears here. He soon begins to hold part of himself back: Miller gives the whole of himself, ten times over.

Durrell is gifted for depicting people's

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physical mannerisms and for the description of places. Miller is good at human externalities but can describe little beyond shabby hotel bedrooms. Durrell has a sense of humour (it must sometimes embarrass him). Miller is innocent of such a trait, an innocence which he shares with the hack pornographer; the latter, though, is content with reducing the sexual act to meaninglessness, whereas Miller honestly believes that the meaninglessness he thus procures *means* something, means highly and means holily. Something to the same effect might be said of the sexual complications of *The Alexandria Quartet*; but where Miller is the conscious anti-artist, the messiah, Durrell is the conscious artist, the æsthete: Chanel ("Scent like a river-pilot led me there") in place of disinfectant, sophistications in place of rant.

My résumé may have been slightly tendentious. There are, it should be said, passages in this book which do not induce incredulity, alarm, or despondency: passages sufficient to make a small book, just as *The Alexandria Quartet*, less its æsthetico-religious-metaphysical confectionery, would make one novel, and as Miller's work, less the excrement and much of the mysticism, would make one book. The editor thinks otherwise. His first words are, "The complete Durrell-Miller correspondence in half-a-dozen scholarly annotated volumes will not be ready for publication until the next century...."

What is going to kill reading in our time is writing.

D. J. Enright

Shakespeare Again

The Shakespearean Ethic. By JOHN VYVYAN. *Chatto & Windus*, 18s.

The Story of the Night. By JOHN HOLLOWAY. *Routledge*, 21s.

THE CRY IS STILL "They come." And with Shakespeare's four-hundredth anniversary imminent, the tide of criticism is at the full. It is difficult to sift what is new or vital from the mass of hack work or precious innovation. Often, it is useful to step back and wait. Over a given period, one or two pieces of criticism will leave their mark and enter the living dialogue between reader and play. Among the crop of the last few years, one would want to note two studies of the moral energies at work in Shakespearean drama: John Vyvyan's *The Shakespearean Ethic*, and John Holloway's *The Story of the Night*.

In his blind, wrong-headed, splendid essay on *Shakespeare and the Drama*, Tolstoy accused Shakespeare of having no grasp whatever of moral truth. "It is at once evident that he does not believe in what he is saying, that he has no need to say it, is inventing the occurrences... and so we do not believe either in the events or in the actions, or in the sufferings of his characters."

Mr. John Vyvyan takes precisely the contrary view. Shakespeare's plays are "ethical theorems of Euclidean logicality." Shakespeare believed "in the higher morality of the Gospels" and his plays are rigorously conceived to instruct us that "there is no salvation without creative mercy." The major tragedies contain complex but deliberate allegories of grace. Although we may never know much about Shakespeare's life, "it will be possible some day to establish his philosophy." Mr. Vyvyan's finely-argued book is intended as a first step in that direction.

Implicit is a theory of the structure of Shakespearean tragedy. We are shown a soul, noble in many respects, "but with a fatal flaw, which lays it open to a special temptation." The hero yields to this temptation and loses the kingship over his own moral being. He commits the tragic act or "act of darkness," experiences a momentary illumination in which he perceives the horror of his doing, and plunges towards death. The origin of Shakespeare's tragic pattern is the dramatisation of the Judas story in the mediæval passion play. Persuaded that Christ's ministry had signified and enacted the supreme truth of salvation, Shakespeare recognised in Judas's betrayal the archetype of tragedy. "Shakespeare is never ethically neutral." Like the mediæval playwright he envisions the soul of man as rising towards grace or falling to damnation. Hell gapes wide beneath the scene of action. From it rise the voices of the tempters and the avenging ghosts.

Hamlet is not, as many critics have supposed, the drama of a noble mind bewildered and destroyed by murderous circumstance. On the contrary: it is the drama of a soul yielding to the temptations of evil and destroying itself. The tragedy lies in the fact that Hamlet has clearly perceived the higher truth of creative mercy, but that he will not act upon his recognition. Instead, he chooses the archaic, barren code of blood-vengeance. "Hamlet disavows the law of Christ to follow the law of Moses; and this, in a Christian, is sin." The true gradient of the play leads from his lofty insight into the nature of man to "the bleeding bodies on which the curtain falls." The Prince of Denmark suffers a just fate because he has refused to

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replace the law of the Old Testament by the sacramental pardon of the New. In this allegory, Ophelia and Polonius play emblematic parts. "When Hamlet sees Ophelia, he is confronting his better self." She is the principle of love which he spurns in her person and in his own soul. Polonius is Fidelity; he must die before Hamlet can keep his oath to darkness. His death behind the arras symbolises the death of Fidelity "behind the dark veils of Hamlet's soul." Thereafter the course of murder is plain. The tragedy ends in "self-slaughter on a racial scale."

But beyond the blackness of the *Hamlet* world are intimations that a rational, sanctified ordering of the human condition is within the reach of man. These intimations are rendered explicit in *Measure for Measure*. "The duke, being Shakespeare," will prevent the old laws of retribution from taking their murderous toll. "The last drop of the curtain in *Hamlet* is on a pile of corpses: in *Measure for Measure*, on a series of unions of love." These have been achieved precisely through those acts of creative mercy which distinguish the Law of Christ from the *lex talionis* of the Old Testament. In the later plays, the elements of religious allegory carry increasing weight. Instead of the downward progress of the tragic fall, we find the soul moving upward through corresponding phases of regeneration. Perdita, in *The Winter's Tale*, is a live allegory of spiritual resurrection. These "plays of healing" culminate in *The Tempest* where the rites of pardon and espousal are celebrated in a crowning allegory. More than any other character in Shakespeare, Prospero is on the path to perfection.

This is, I believe, a fair statement of Mr. Vyvyan's thesis. He presents it with cogency and force. But will it hold? I think not, and although it is the very opposite of the Tolstoyan position, the cause of error in both is identical. Neither Tolstoy's essay nor *The Shakespearean Ethic* takes into account a simple but primordial fact. Shakespeare wrote *plays*—not philosophic meditations or allegoric poems. A theory of drama is suspect unless it matches the reality of performance. Anyone who has seen *Hamlet* or *Measure for Measure* acted will realise where the Tolstoyan assumption of Shakespearean implausibility and Mr. Vyvyan's pattern of moral allegory go wrong. Take *Hamlet*: the entire structure of the last act hinges on a modulation in tone (the precise turning-point is in Scene II, Act V). The dark fable takes a new direction, surging upward to the luminous solemnity of Hamlet's death and Fortinbras' royal progress. The Prince voices profound regret over the chaos of spirit that has guided his behaviour towards Laertes. Indeed, he asks pardon of his foe. The exchanges with Horatio before the duel are rich in new insight and tranquil nobility. In Hamlet's death there is a cruel, fortuitous waste, and the angels that attend his spirit will not convey it to some archaic hell. But because he is intent upon his abstract theme, so sensitive a critic as Mr. Vyvyan can write that to Shakespeare Fortinbras' accession "means the defeat of humanity and the perpetuation of genocide." In fact, it signifies that restoration of order and degree which gives the close of a number of Shakespearean tragedies (with the crucial exception of *Lear*) their mysterious forgiving calm.

Or consider Polonius: even a mediocre performance of the play disproves the allegoric conception. In Polonius, cliché has become the condition of language and gesture. By sheer force of accumulation, cliché can turn to eloquence. But between Polonius' golden words and the narrow secrecy of his actions there is an essential disparity. Fidelity is not comical, but Polonius clearly *is*. This naïve fact nowhere intrudes on Mr. Vyvyan's theory.

Shakespeare does not use dramatic characters as mouth-pieces. His personages live with their own fierce integrity. The Duke, in *Measure for Measure*, is not the playwright faintly disguised.

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He is an exceedingly complex and rather unpleasant figure: a mind partially divorced from action, a cold, brilliant rhetorician, but also a *voyeur* in whom sensuality burns hot (with what fondness he dwells on the sex-masquerade whereby Mariana deceives Angelo!). It is these complications of feeling which give the play its feverish, disturbing tone. In performance (and *that* is the test), the ending has a cold touch of artifice. The Duke takes for his own the woman whom Angelo has coveted at the risk of perdition. Isabella yields with mute alacrity to the glint of power. She will make a harsh Duchess. The allegory, if there is one, bears not on grace but on politics. Compromise, even where it is factitious, prevails over what Ibsen calls "the claims of the ideal." Measure for measure yields half-measures. That is the necessary way of the world.

There comes a point in his challenging book at which Mr. Vyvyan does attempt to face the problem of the Shakespearean audience. How is it that no one has discerned the allegoric design?

> There must have been a circle who understood his constructional principles and the undermeaning of his plays; but the prosecution of Marlowe and Sir Walter Raleigh for "atheism" would have forced its members to secrecy. We must also remember that the period, like the Middle Ages, delighted in mysteries for their own sake; every guild was a "mystery," and its secrets, whether valuable or not, were held inviolable. The closing of the theatres during the Commonwealth caused a break in the English dramatic tradition; and during this time, presumably, the Shakespearean secrets were totally lost. . . .

This is to launch a great many wild hares. It wholly contradicts what we know of the actual practices of the Elizabethan theatre (where amid the Chamberlain's Men was the "guild" or the hermetic mystery?). And it makes nonsense of Mr. Vyvyan's own central idea: if Shakespeare was professing an allegory of Christian love, why should he, or those who understand him, fear prosecution for atheism? Moreover, this notion of an "initiate" audience which alone comprehends the "true meaning" of Shakespeare is a critical myth. There is no shred of evidence to support it. The play appeals to the spectator on diverse levels of intent. But not even the highest is the exclusive property of some masonic circle.

THOUGH HE DOES NOT directly engage Vyvyan, Mr. Holloway provides a stringent counterstatement. *The Story of the Night* reminds us of the specific historical tenor of Shakespeare's thought. "The early seventeenth century was a notable period of moral and religious thinking in England; and many of its chief convictions in these fields had deep roots and a deep justification in the whole civilization of that time, and what it demanded of its members in the sphere of conduct. To-day, in our very different civilization, some of these convictions have been displaced, I think, from the centre of our moral needs and our moral consciousness."

The shapes of moral meaning in Shakespeare's plays are founded not on esoteric or eccentric doctrine, but on strongly delineated late-Medieval and Elizabethan assumptions: the heinousness of usurpation, the ambiguous duty to avenge one's forebears, the code of absolute obedience within the family, the primacy of man over woman, the privileges and obligations of high place. A Shakespearean drama is "a momentous energising experience" linking poet and community. We cannot rightly apprehend this experience if we remove "by modernistic over-ingenuity" the underlying ground of belief and historical reality.

Contrary to Vyvyan, Mr. Holloway sees in Hamlet a man who has had no choice. The play presents "a recognizable kind of situation, a man engaged in a known career." Hamlet is forced to assume the conventionally defined role

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of the revenger. This compels him to avenge a wronged kinsman and to "purge from society the evil it could not otherwise escape." It is the role, not Hamlet's character, that quickens and determines the course of events. These, in turn, derive meaning from the Elizabethan certitude that all hazard and chance (so prominent in the actual plot) are part of a providential design. Revealed and understood, Fortune becomes Destiny. It is this which gives the nervous, tangled play its marvellous coherence.

Throughout *Othello,* we must keep our eyes steadily on the stylized image of the princely man, vulnerable through his very largesse of spirit, and on the Elizabethan view of marriage and sexual purity. The play "is set within the moral world of its time" and that world regarded as self-evident modes of feeling we find it difficult to share. *Macbeth* shows the usurpation of just order in man's estate. The evil things of night, incarnate in witches and armed riders, in carnivorous horses, fierce storms, and the death-chargers of *Revelation,* "spread through the ordinary patterns of life and give it a new quality of unnatural disruption, strangeness and violence." In *Lear,* an even blacker chaos rules. Holloway is beautifully apt when he quotes Scripture and Homily to show that the play rehearses the "terrible potentiality" (literal to the Elizabethans) that universal Nature might deflect towards evil and final ruin. The reigning metaphor is that of animalism: the human characters are surrounded "with the sub-human creatures whose appearance they are fast and eagerly assuming." The parallels are not Christian so much as they are out of the agony and query of *Job.*

Looking back on the major plays, Mr. Holloway proposes a unifying pattern of ritual and sacrifice. The Shakespearean tragic hero suffers an ordeal of gradual isolation from the community about him; in the end he becomes a scapegoat and sacrificial victim. There are graphic hints of ritual in the close of *Macbeth* (the destroyer of fertility is hunted down by a forest of green boughs) and in the figure of Lear as Jack-a-Green, crowned with flowers.

This idea is not new; it has been argued by the Cambridge anthropologists and their successors. The intimation of archaic sacrificial patterns and seasonal rites in late-Mediæval and Elizabethan practice has grown on modern criticism. But Holloway brings to this complex, shadowy conjecture a new solidity. The particular quality of grief and consolation we experience at the close of Shakespearean tragedy would derive from our awareness of having taken part in a sacrificial, purging action. The great work of literature offers us, in some measure, "what rituals of other societies have offered their members . . . through being in some respects the same kind of thing."

The Story of the Night is a useful reminder of the psychological remoteness and historical locality of certain elements in Shakespearean tragedy. In its stress of role rather than character, in its close awareness of the autonomy of *action,* as distinct from the modern idiom of consciousness, it parallels John Jones's important book *On Aristotle and Greek Tragedy.* Both remind us that literary works which are, in one sense, timeless and intimate to us, are, in other respects, strange and distant. Mr. Holloway's essays are full of close-packed intelligence and waspish reproof. Often he writes below himself in spurts of donnish sarcasm. Moreover, his insistence on the clarity of Shakespeare's design, on the notion that an "implicit chorus" tells us how to watch the play, leaves the works less rich, less interesting than they are. Thus, I find both his gloss on the beginning of *Macbeth* and on the end of *Lear* lucid, yet impoverishing. Macbeth's initial involvement with the spectre of rebellion is far more ambiguous than Holloway allows.

But even where one differs, this book commands attention and respect. Though it opposes Vyvyan's conjectures at every point, *The Story of the Night* concurs in focusing on the tremendous moral interest of Shakespeare's art. In this, both works are distinctive of our present bias.

George Steiner

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LETTERS

The Gutenberg Galaxy

MR. ALDOUS HUXLEY'S difficulty [ENCOUNTER, *April*] in understanding the divergence between the oral and the written symbolisation of immediate experience deserves clarification. The extensions of man in oral expression concern all of the senses at once. Phonetic writing is a translation of all of the senses in visual terms. It is an extreme abstraction and extension of the visual faculty in isolation from the other senses. The degree of participant involvement in oral discourse is very high just because the oral mode is of very low definition. The written mode is of high definition and low participation. No value judgments are intended by "high" and "low" in the present context. They refer only to arrangements of data.

My *Gutenberg Galaxy*, in the same way, is not *anti*-book nor *pro*-book, but an effort to understand the psychic and social consequences of phonetic literacy. Electric technology is entirely anti-book and anti-literacy because it ends all fragmentation of faculties and of space. The alphabet exploded, the telegraph and radio implode man and society.

Mr. Huxley seems to imply that even speech is an extension of man that fragments the seamless process of universal consciousness. Such cosmic thoughts began to appeal deeply to the highly fragmented sensibilities of the later eighteenth century. They continue to appeal for the same reason. The last extension of man to await completion technologically is the simulation of consciousness itself. Literacy may prove to have been preferable.

MARSHALL MCLUHAN

Toronto, Canada

"Fail-Safe"

SIDNEY HOOK in his review of *Fail-Safe* [ENCOUNTER, May] sounds like one of the grim old Soviet critics upbraiding a young poet for failing to follow the tiresome party line.

Your reviewer says the book "is certain to encourage the appeasement of Nikita Khrushchev." This language is usually reserved for the Goldwater wing of the Republican Party rather than a literary critic. Besides, it is nonsense. The problem in the United States is not that book readers (mostly gentle old maids and college students) will descend upon Washington demanding that we give up our 900 *"Minute Men,"* but that the President has virtually no public encouragement in the delicate business of trying to live peacefully, if not amicably, in an explosive world with the difficult Russians.

As for Khrushchev, of course he is a rascal, and possibly more dangerous than Stalin because he is more daring. One cannot imagine Stalin, brute though he was, stuffing IRBMs in Cuba. But this is not the point of the book. It is that we have reached an intolerable state, and scoundrels, snobs, evangelists, and thieves must learn to live with one another.

TRISTRAM COFFIN

Washington, D.C.

MR. COFFIN is wrong about almost everything. Book readers in America are *not* mostly "gentle old maids and college students." (This is belied even by the membership lists of the Book-of-the-Month-Club which selected *Fail-Safe*). President Kennedy has the support of virtually the entire scientific community, of labour, education, youth, the chief organs of the press, and even of articulate spokesmen of business in trying to live peacefully with the Communists. But this is not the same thing as urging a policy that would lead to further aggression on the part of the Kremlin, and ultimately to surrender by the West, in order to avoid the danger of nuclear attack. This seems to me to be the upshot of the policy Mr. Coffin advocates.

Nor is Mr. Coffin any more accurate in stating the point of *Fail-Safe*. The point is, as the authors have themselves put it, that nuclear war is an "inevitable" consequence of our defence systems. I showed that the argument used by the authors is defective and based on misinformation. In supporting their argument, Mr. Coffin is compounding an intellectual fraud.

SIDNEY HOOK

New York University

South African Censorship

IN THE LIGHT of facts learned too late to be included in my article "Censored, Banned, Gagged" (ENCOUNTER, June 1963) I believe I did less than justice to the work of the Cape Town Branch of P.E.N. as distinct from South African P.E.N. as a whole. Apart from opposition to the Censorship Bill in its various forms, Cape Town has made its own strenuous efforts on behalf of individual writers, protesting to the highest quarters as well as in the Cape Town press when books have been banned.

NADINE GORDIMER

Johannesburg.

Attlee and the Bomb

IN HIS REPLY to my letter "Attlee and the Bomb" (June, 1963), Mr. R. H. S. Crossman widens the issue in dispute by arguing that the statement by Lord Alexander in Parliament in May, 1948 that atomic weapons were being developed was peremptory and inadequate. Whether he is right or wrong in this (and I think he is wrong) it is really nothing to do with the matter. The only relevant point here is that if Mr. Attlee was, as alleged, pursuing a policy of concealment, he would not have authorised any such statement to be made.

The only issue is whether, in the context of the contention developed by Mr. Crossman, in his introduction to *The English Constitution*—the decline over the years of the authority of the Cabinet

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and its substitution by that of the Prime Minister —he is justified in saying in support of his case that the decision to develop atomic weapons was "taken by Mr. Attlee without any prior discussion in the Cabinet, and that he had never revealed it to any but a handful of trusted friends."

The only evidence he produces to justify this charge of concealment is a letter from Mr. Shinwell, who was not in the Cabinet at the time or directly concerned either with the decision or its operation. Sir Norman Brook's statement to him that it is not referred to in the Cabinet records is irrelevant. It was taken in the Defence Sub-Committee, over which the Prime Minister presided and whose Minutes were always circulated to Cabinet members. The absence of any reference in the Minutes of the Cabinet itself is merely an indication of general agreement by its members. I have questioned five of the seven surviving members of the Cabinet and they have all told me they were fully aware of the decision.

As Minister of Supply from 1947 to 1951 I was concerned with all aspects, peaceful and military, of atomic development and was present at the Cabinet Sub-Committee, when, after discussion, the decision to develop nuclear weapons was taken. I can state categorically that at no time was there any attempt to withhold the information from other Ministers, and indeed I well remember discussing various aspects of my responsibilities with some of them—Sir Stafford Cripps and Aneurin Bevan for example on the location of the main producing centre.

And if my evidence is insufficient, I am authorised by Lord Attlee to say that there is no truth whatever in Mr. Crossman's allegation.

G. R. Strauss

House of Commons

The Case of Georg Lukács

On George Lichtheim's Controversial Article

Mr. George Lichtheim's condemnation of Lukács [Encounter, May] and Mr. George Steiner's praise [June] both fail in the same way. Neither of them sees Lukács as a tragic figure, the tragedy springing from the forms of his own thought and not from cowardice and failure within (as Lichtheim appears to suppose) or from repression by his political masters (as Steiner seems to think). The result is that each distorts the record in his own way. Steiner is right as against Lichtheim in underlining the immensity of the achievement; for Lichtheim to discuss *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* without mentioning *Der Junge Hegel*, in which the older Lukács produced a genuinely serious and not merely Stalinist critique of his own youthful Hegelianism, is bad enough. But Lichtheim is right against Steiner in underlining the immensity of the failure; *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft* is not merely a "bitter, often silly book," but a Zhdanovite piece of falsification which ranks among the intellectual crimes of the age. (If Steiner will explain to me why Bertrand Russell's proposals for preventive war on the Soviet Union constitute a "reason" for misrepresenting Russell as a philosopher I shall be extremely obliged to him.)

Lukács' later work springs from an attempt to unite his own early non-Marxist critique of naturalism in the arts with Marx's critique of bourgeois society. Naturalism is the myth that there is an external world of objects, existing independently of our forms of description and discoverable apart from them, which we can describe, if we are careful enough, just "as it is," from an absolute standpoint. Bourgeois society (as Lukács learnt from Max Weber as much as from Marx) is the society of rationalising, objectifying economic and social life, of double-entry book-keeping, commodity exchange, and hard facts. What Lukács has pointed out incisively in much of the detail of his work are the links between naturalistic forms of description and bourgeois forms of life.

But his vision of bourgeois society itself betrayed him. For in dismissing Engels' mechanistic misinterpretations of Marx he replaced them by Leninist misinterpretations of Marx in which the real working-class of bourgeois society is replaced by a Weberian ideal type of proletarian, incarnated in the Communist Party. Lukács' wish not to abandon Marxist concepts from which he had learnt so much led him at this point to substitute concepts for realities, to become in fact guilty of the very idealism of which he was later to accuse himself, but only to mislocate it in his deviations from Leninist orthodoxy.

The final irony lies in the insistence of his Leninist party that Lukács should accept Engels. Lukács' consequent political imprisonment is thus fundamentally at the hands of his own ideas. The premises from which uncritical obedience followed were themselves freely accepted. Where, as in *Der Junge Hegel*, there have been areas available for free enquiry Lukács has produced work of great brilliance; elsewhere he has been consistent only, as Lichtheim pointed out, in always recanting.

The contradiction between his best work and his political servility is extremely reminiscent of Hegel. But had he not made this fundamental error Lukács would never have been able to live out his vocation of keeping Marx alive in Eastern Europe. Hegel's survival as an official Prussian philosopher was a precondition of the Left Hegelians and so of Marx.

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Lukács' survival as an official Leninist philosopher may turn out to be a precondition of a genuine revival of Marx in Eastern Europe in which the critique of socialist realism will lead on to a Marxist political critique of the class power of the rulers of the Soviet bloc. How far Lukács himself has been and is from such a critique is shown by his letter to an Italian Communist on Stalinism (*Survey*, April, 1963) where he ascribes the main features of Stalinism to personal characteristics and actions of Stalin and nowhere asks what sort of social system the Soviet Union must have for one man's errors to produce such far-reaching effects. Equally notable is Lukács' estimation of what a Trotskyist victory would have meant by referring to his own estimate of Trotsky as a person.

Thus in the end the whole-hearted embrace of Leninist orthodoxy has resulted in Lukács losing sight completely of the genuine insights of Marxism, and returning to the romantic individualism of his early youth.

ALASDAIR MACINTYRE

University College, Oxford

GEORGE LICHTHEIM makes a number of acute criticisms of Lukács, as a politician and a critic. But the pathos of moral indignation, suspect anyhow, is not adequate to the task of making a reckoning with so subtle an intelligence, nor with the complexity of his position as a would-be loyal Communist Party member in the circumstances of the last 30–40 years.

Lichtheim fails to perceive the peculiar drama of Lukács' literary existence, that is more than a personal drama of alternating challenge and collapse. In accordance with the Party line, Lukács has persistently tried to establish the right of the Communist movement to the "inheritance" of the great culture of the past—hence the Marxist interpretation of Shakespeare, Goethe, Balzac, Tolstoy, and the elements of a Marxist aesthetic. But he has not been content with a "vulgar-sociological" analysis, and has always tackled fundamental problems of form; and he has refused to ignore or dismiss authors who do not fit in with the Party's desiderata. Hence the drama of his work as a whole. For over and over again, and with great and even bold persistence, he has cracked the membrane of orthodox and authoritative Marxism. He has undermined the thesis that a work's quality depends on the "progressive" outlook of the writer; he revised the Leninist concept of "partisanship"; by emphasising the writer's responsibility to his work he put a limit to the scope of Party "guidance"; he was a nagging critic of Zhdanovism and a surprisingly outspoken one of the products of Socialist Realism. Many of his critical essays on 19th-century writers in particular, such as Goethe, Scott, Balzac, Raabe, Fontane, like his work on Thomas Mann, were in effect powerful pleas for a loosening up and liberalisation of Party doctrine and feeling.

We should not be misled by Lukács' orthodox practice of referring to canonical authority, for he uses Engels against Lenin, Lenin against Stalin, Stalin against Stalin. The orthodox are certainly not misled; he has been, and still is, continually attacked by Party spokesmen for his anti-Party, anti-revolutionary, bourgeois, formalist, idealist, etc., tendencies. The drama of all this is more than personal, for what we have is an extended exposition of the clash between the ruling Marxist ideology and reality, *i.e.*, the reality of great literature. In no other sphere of thought have the limitations of Marxism been so exposed within the framework of the Party.

Apart from this dramatic spectacle, there are positive critical insights to be gained from Lukács' work, partly due to his Marxism, and particularly impressive because they are embodied in a Marxist system. His Marxism has made Lukács always see the big problems, the great aesthetic issues, that most literary critics prudently avoid. We need not be satisfied with his theory of realism—and indeed it is often confused and sometimes patently untenable; but he forces us to consider what the relation of art to reality is, and rightly insists that the reality from which art springs is a complex, dynamic social-historical nexus, neither separate from man nor merely subjective. He attacks repeatedly the problem of how it is that art has both a particular sociological source and a "universal" validity. It is characteristic that he is pre-eminently concerned with the nature of the literary genres, for in them he can analyse artistic forms that correspond both to different modes of perception and to particular aspects of reality. His chapter on the characteristics of tragedy and the novel in *The Historical Novel* is brilliant, and his category of the "type" most illuminating. Though the Marxist tradition holds him back from developing a theory of the artistic imagination—perhaps the outstanding failing of his aesthetic—he repeatedly does justify the workings of the imagination, even to his own embarrassment. He repeatedly provokes dissent, even irritation (what systematic aesthetic does not?). But again and again juxtapositions and comparisons are stimulating, enriching.

THIS IS TYPICALLY so with his latest book, *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*. Here he has tried to find the common factor of "modernism" in all its contradictory phases and styles. We may well reject his sweeping theory of "decadence," and refuse, as Lichtheim says, to consider the themes of alienation, chaos, and angst solely as the product of an inhuman bourgeoisie—just as we can refuse to accept the standpoint and perspective of Socialist Realism. It is indeed extremely disconcerting to find that this intelligent and bold thinker always asserts that there are no serious moral-personal problems in Communist society, and that where such matters crop up in Soviet literature they are only hang-overs from bourgeois society. All the same, the book as a whole is a most illuminating essay, that gives a better chance to find a view-point and see connections.

Lichtheim has every reason to criticise the rigidity of Lukács' categories, the orthodox schema of "critical realism" and "socialist realism." He is right in saying that Lukács has been extraordinarily unresponsive to the search for new forms of literary expression in the West as in the Communist sphere

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Belgrade

INDIGNANT *Communists here have complained about an advertisement of Belgrade's Kultura Publishers for their new edition of Karl Marx's* Das Capital *on "bible paper." The comrades from Kultura explained that "bible paper" was the only Serbo-Croat phrase available for the otherwise untranslatable category of "India" or "onion skin" paper.* DER SPIEGEL

London

QUIZZES [*writes Angus Wilson*] *continue to make curious mistakes. In "Television Top of the Form" two schools were informed that Wagner worked in Beirut. In the same programme a 12-year-old schoolgirl apparently thought that the Channel was called "Le Merde Anglaise." That made me glad to be home.*

THE QUEEN

Cape Town

PUBLIC LIBRARIES *in South Africa are burning hundreds of books which appear on the Verwoerd Government's banned list—and the number is increasing steadily. Since the Nationalist Government came to power in 1948, thousands of books have been banned. Most are shoddy paperbacks, but a considerable number have been considered worthy enough to be bought by libraries. These receive official lists of banned books two, three, or four times a month. They inform all their branches and books are removed from the shelves. Books are locked away for six months in case the Board of Censors changes its mind or successful representations are made. Then the senior library official takes the doomed books to the municipal incinerator where they are burnt. Some of the world's most famous authors have been banned in South Africa, ranging from Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Gorky to Hemingway, Monsarrat, Salinger, Faulkner, and practically all of Erskine Caldwell.*

Once the Censors banned "Black Beauty" before they realised it was only about a horse.

THE OBSERVER

IN *matters of art, Mr. Khrushchev is the Lady Dunalley of Russia. We read his remarks in* ENCOUNTER, *the Anglo-American magazine, which carries a report of Mr. Khrushchev's speech. Some of his remarks could not be allowed in the "Irish Times." Not because they are too red, even too pink, but because they are too blue.* IRISH TIMES

Cambridge

WHEN *the Annan report was considered here to-day at the conference of the Association of Teachers of Russian, attention was directed to a clash between Russian and the Classics. In Scotland teachers of French and German had welcomed the report, which encourages the teaching of Russian, but among teachers of Latin there was strong opposition. Discussion in the press had been acrimonious. The teachers laughed loudly when it was said: "We know teachers of Latin who have come out root and branch against teaching Russian on the ground that it is a passing phase and that the eternal verities of Latin and Greek will never be upset by anything like Russian...."* THE TIMES

Florida

THE LANGUAGE *that all the space people are talking down here is called Spacespeak. It sounds like English, but it isn't. In Spacespeak, people are constantly saying "all systems are Go." This means "the rocket is working O.K." No real Spacespeaker would be caught dead saying "O.K." "Mercury Control" will occasionally say "A-O.K.," but purists consider even this a corruption.*

Acquiring fluency in Spacespeak is extremely difficult. Linguists rank it third, after Basque and Navajo, among the world's most obscure languages. Still, it is possible to learn a pidgin Spacespeak with relatively little study. For example, nothing will brand a visitor here as unspace more surely than calling a "launch vehicle" a "rocket." Calling the "launch vehicle" a "missile" would be almost as bad. They never actually put anything into orbit of course. They always "achieve orbital insertion." If orbital insertion is not achieved, it is not because something goes wrong, but because of a "malfunction." Almost certainly, the "malfunction" will occur in a "system." "Systems" play a big part in Spacespeak. They are the great villains, always threatening to ruin everything by becoming "no-Go."

Two words that must never be used are "yes" and "no." Say "affirmative" or "negative," and say it with authority. Cleverness with prepositions is also important, for they are welded indiscriminately on to all sorts of other words. Space people for example, would never dream of flying over Communist China: they "overfly" it and then come back to talk about their "overflight." Their spacecraft do not splash down into the water—they experience "splashdown." "Splashdown" incidentally, is an exception to the rule that prepositions go on the front of Spacepeak words. ("Overflight," "onboard," "downrange," etc.). So is "countdown."

NEW YORK TIMES

London

THAT *formidable Tory ex-Minister Nigel Birch called on Mr. Macmillan to resign and make way for a much younger man, loyally quoting Robert Browning's* The Lost Leader *("Never glad confident morning again!") by way of a friendly political obituary. Remembering the last time poetry was quoted in his honour by a Conservative backbencher, starting on that occasion (it was last summer) with the line, "If you can keep your head," poor Mr. Macmillan must have been wishing that the benches behind him would stick to prose—anyway for the rest of his time, however long or short that may turn out to be.* THE GUARDIAN

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—only in his latest work is there a somewhat grudging relaxation towards Kafka, even towards Brecht. But these and other failings have to be put in their right perspective, and should not be allowed so to obsess us that we fail to appreciate the force of his achievement, or at least of his aggressive challenge.

Roy Pascal

Birmingham University

I feel some protest must be made against the disturbing attack on Georg Lukács made by George Lichtheim. The opportunity has been lost for a balanced judgment of what is valuable in Lukács' criticism, and in its place a magazine of influence has published an incoherent diatribe.

How can Mr. Lichtheim say that Lukács has "failed altogether as a responsible writer, and ultimately as a man," and imagine that his article could support such a statement? To make such an *ex cathedra* statement about any human being is to claim a divine knowledge of the totality of a man's conscience and actions that is not displayed in the article you published.

Less presumptuous, perhaps, is the body of Mr. Lichtheim's polemic; in it, nevertheless, he has given little evidence for the value-judgments he has made. Lukács suffers from the inherent disease of his persuasion: he is too ready to substitute a skein of generalisations for a detailed analysis of a novelist's actual words. In this he resembles Christopher Caudwell, Alick West, Roy Pascal, and Arnold Kettle—to name only a few. But when Lukács—like these critics—has attempted to support his statements and to place works in the context of their age and the tradition of a particular genre, the result has been illuminating and thought-provoking: he has added to one's understanding of a work. One has only to think of the analysis of conflict and the figure of the hero in the historical novel and drama in *The Historical Novel*, the essays on *"Faust"* in *Goethe and His Age*, the exposition of Gorky's humanism in *Russian Realism in World Literature*, or his explanation of Hegel's reading of Kant in *The Young Hegel* to excuse the heavy movements of thought in his *Essays on Realism* or the blundering apportionment of praise and blame in *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*. The way in which he expresses his insensitivity to Joyce, Proust, Gide, Beckett, etc., certainly leads one to suspect that he has never read these authors, or has read only poorly translated extracts from their novels; and what could be more misleading than, say, a piece of Joycean pastiche out of context? But does exaltation of Balzac and Tolstoy at the expense of Flaubert and Zola, or the statement of Fenimore Cooper's debt to Scott really invalidate Lukács' judgments? Of course not. As Taine said of John Stuart Mill in a different context:

> You will tell me that our philosopher has cut off his wings to strengthen his legs. True: and he has acted wisely. Experience marks out the career which she opens to us; she gives us an object to aim at; but also lays down limits within which we are confined.

We must remember, too, that Fenimore Cooper's leather-stocking tales are definitely indebted to Scott—see John McCormick's *Catastrophe and Imagination* and many earlier works by other scholars for an explanation of this fact of literary history.

Perhaps it is when he accuses Lukács of Leninism that Mr. Lichtheim feels on safer ground. The power of such an accusation is as great as that of the comparison with Condorcet, and its implication that this 78-year-old believer in progress should have cut his intellectual throat to escape the Zhdanovist scaffold. Lukács was not the only critic to imagine in 1934 that Lenin's examination of empiricism was a useful text-book: the universities of Europe and the Americas contain not a few who thought likewise. A list of those who used Leninist jargon at the time of the Purges would embarrass many accepted writers to-day, who have found new faiths and new vocabularies. Surely such a castigation of the writer of *The Destruction of Reason* could be extended to the author of *The Idea of a Christian Society*: Anglo-Catholicism and monarchism are sins as mortal to the critical muse as Leninism.

Other points raised by Mr. Lichtheim demand enquiry. Is Thomas Mann, for example, a "worthy but distinctly second-rate German emigré author of unimpeachably bourgeois-democratic outlook"? Can one call Lukács' reading of Scott "fondness"? How does Mr. Lichtheim support his judgment of Lukács' "insensitivity to the German language" with a quotation from an indifferent translation? Is a critic compelled to relieve his work with a "gleam of humour"? What does Mr. Lichtheim mean by "conscious subjection to the Zhdanovist line on Socialist Realism"?—Lukács himself attacked the vulgar Marxists who imagined a nuts-and-bolts thesis to be criticism, and his analysis of the hero in fiction does not accord with such Zhdanovist lay-figures as, say, the protagonist of Boris Polevoi's tear-jerking *The Story of a Real Man*.

Can anyone deny that, on one level, Kafka's nightmares are evidence of "the diabolical character of the world of modern capitalism"? Of course, the forms of such a world are but part of K.'s experience of what the cover-blurb of my paperback selection of Kafka's short stories entitles "A Poetic Interpretation of the Secret of our Existence," but Lukács' remark has a certain truth. Perhaps he underestimated K., but what does Mr. Lichtheim mean by saying that Freud is "the greatest representative of the Enlightenment tradition in modern times"? I must have missed the reports of Freud's canonisation. Perhaps Mr. Lichtheim refers to the Weimar *Aufklärung*, and places Freud in the pantheon of German Literature. Or is one expected to believe that Freud is the greatest scientist of our age—the logical deduction from Mr. Lichtheim's remark. I prescribe a little Eysenck to dispel this notion, and the outrageous application of the word "simpleton" to Pavlov. Freud had the intuition—and the blind spots—of a great physician, but why exalt him at the expense of someone who attempted a modest science of psychology? The plodding work of Pavlov may seem naïve when compared

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with the presumptuous assurance of Freud's disciples in child guidance clinics and on executive selection boards, but the plodding of Lukács is preferable to such Freudian literary interpretations as—*inter alia*—Herbert Read's nonsensical reading of Wordsworth.

What have Sartre and Co. done for "the sociology of culture in Western Europe and America"? If Sartre is Mr. Lichtheim's positive for an attack on Lukács, I see that it would take more space than I can use here to refute the implications inherent in such a statement. If political retrenchments invalidate criticism, Sartre is poor stuff indeed. But how inadequate such a pottage of *non-sequiturs* as *What is Literature?* seems when set against the insights of Lukács!

Mr. Lichtheim's vision of "modernism" undertaking to solve the problems of "intellectuals living in an industrial society" gives one some idea of how he manages to reconcile a Lukács whose "intellect was not indeed very powerful... but subtle, flexible, far-reaching, and genuinely critical" with one who is indifferent "to style in general." The sad thing is that such illogical argument may be taken by many of those who have not read Lukács as Encounter's authoritative ukase against him.

One last point: I do not see that one can talk of the "tragedy" of Lukács: after all, he is not yet dead.

John Cumming

London

Mr. George Lichtheim's assessment of Georg Lukács would have been fairer if he had given your readers some idea of what has been said about Lukács' work by orthodox party men. Thus, he says that Lukács retains "the essentially Stalinist characterisation of the Soviet orbit as a realm of 'socialism' opposed to a Western capitalist-imperialist bloc," but does not indicate that Lukács has been accused of making a dangerous distinction between the forces of peace and the forces of socialism—of underestimating the importance of strengthening the socialist camp. If Lukács uses "the stereotyped language of the Cold War," he does so with overtones which Mr. Lichtheim has not adequately interpreted.

Orthodox criticisms of Lukács may be studied at length in a collection of essays published in East Berlin in 1960: *Georg Lukács und der Revisionismus*, edited by Hans Koch. The eight authors find Lukács quite as exasperating as Mr. Lichtheim does, and if the book is ever translated into English, the publishers might well find *An Intellectual Disaster* a convenient title.

Geoffrey Carnall

Edinburgh

Lichtheim Replies

The purpose of my—necessarily brief and inadequate—assessment of Lukács' recent intellectual performance was to contrast the reality with the myth of the great, lonely, persecuted thinker: cut off from the West by an Iron Curtain not of his own making, long silenced by a ruthless censorship, and even to-day unable to communicate with his true audience save by hints and allusions. The importance of this myth to those who created it may be gauged from the pained tone of some of the communications to which I must make a very brief reply. Mr. MacIntyre at least agrees that the deliberate perversion of truth in *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft* represents an intellectual crime (he puts it more strongly than I did). Perhaps his former Trotskyist affiliation has helped him to perceive the peculiar immorality of this typically Stalinist literary performance. I am afraid I cannot share his high estimate of *Der junge Hegel*; and if I had found room for an analysis of *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* I should have had to point out that in some respects it anticipates the subsequent Stalinist institution of two truths: one for the masses and one for the elect. In other respects we seem to be in agreement; and I did describe Lukács as a "tragic" figure.

Mr. Cumming addresses so many rhetorical questions to me—some of them remarkably obfuscating, such as the quaint suggestion that Thomas Mann may have been intended in my characterisation of the literary mediocrities embalmed in Lukács' *Agitprop* essays—that it would take me another article to deal with all his points. To judge from his aggrieved tone he is one of the worshippers who still regard Lukács as a great, though perhaps not wholly infallible, guide through the maze of Leninist literary criticism. I happen to believe that any Westerner who accepts Leninism (as distinct from Marxism) commits intellectual suicide, though the effect may be less disastrous in the case of East Europeans. Mr. Cumming and I are unlikely to agree on this subject. Two minor points: (1) My remark about Lukács' "insensitivity to the German language" clearly referred to his original writings, not to any translation. (2) Can one deny that Kafka's nightmares are evidence of "the diabolical character of the world of modern capitalism"? Indeed one can, especially if (like Lukács, and unlike Mr. Cumming) one knows something about their social and literary background, which was about as remote from "modern capitalism" as anything can well be.

Mr. Carnall reminds me that Lukács has been assaulted in print by a group of East European hatchetmen, including some of his Hungarian enemies (the book has been in my possession for years), and infers that this somehow balances my own critical remarks about his intellectual record. May I in turn suggest to him that it is not paying Lukács a compliment to measure him against a collection of Stalinist boors and character assassins? Whatever his failings—and they are very great indeed, both morally and intellectually—Lukács has to be judged by general European standards. My essay was an attempt—possibly too brief and summary—to assess his work by these criteria.

Professor Pascal thinks I am too harsh and have done insufficient justice to Lukács' great achievements as a literary critic. This might well become the theme for a lengthy discussion, for which unfortunately there is no space. In the context of such a debate I should perhaps venture to enlarge

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on a suggestion which will doubtless give further offence in some quarters: it is my impression—speaking as an outsider—that a reputation for intellectual stringency can be secured in literary criticism with the help of mental gifts which would not secure for their owner the very highest rank in some other branches of learning. I may be mistaken, but it has never seemed to me that the critical distinctions established by Lukács in his later writings (I deliberately except his earlier works) were based on the kind of rigorous mental training that is required, *e.g.*, in philosophy. The value of his interpretations of Goethe, Balzac, Tolstoy, etc., within the general Marxist canon, is another possible subject of disagreement. Here I merely observe that I am unable to regard a book such as *Goethe und seine Zeit* as a useful contribution to my own understanding of classical German literature—a literature with which I grew up. It seems to me both learned and banal: not an unusual combination. It is also remarkably un-Marxist in that it signally fails to analyse the fusion of aristocratic and bourgeois values which was the essence of the Weimar culture. Professor Pascal is an authority on German literature: is he really prepared to vouch for the *bona fides* of a critic who on this important subject systematically obscures the very historical process he is supposed to be concerned with? The explanation, of course, is that the essays collected in this particular volume date from the 'thirties, and—like practically everything Lukács wrote—served a political purpose: in this case the construction of a "bourgeois-revolutionary" background to sustain the myth of a great popular tradition of progressivism.

I TAKE NOTE that Mr. George Steiner is the author of an essay on Lukács in the *Kenyon Review*. I also note that he regards Lukács as "the only major German literary critic of our epoch"—an opinion unlikely to be held outside the restricted coterie of worshippers. If time and space were available I should embark on a brief dissertation upon the subject of Stalinist middle-brow literature, and upon the naïvety of critics who are so impressed by Lukács' earlier achievements that they quite ignore the extent to which later on he tacitly accepted the intellectual (not merely political) standards of middle-brow Stalinist theorising about culture as well as politics. There was a time when non-European performances were judged by European criteria. Nowadays the backward countries are beginning to cast their shadow over the more advanced ones, and pliable figures like Lukács offer their assistance in the resulting sell-out of critical and intellectual values. Mr. Steiner's views on Lukács' political record are not worth controverting. He comes to the consideration of these matters with a mind unburdened by any but the most fragmentary understanding of Marxism, Communism, or the history of the past four decades. Despite the confident tone of his pronouncements I am not persuaded that he is competent to discuss the subject.

GEORGE LICHTHEIM

London

AUTHORS

Alastair Buchan is the Director of the Institute for Strategic Studies in London... **John Bayley** is a Fellow of New College, Oxford, and the author of the book of criticism entitled "The Characters of Love" (Constable, 1960).... **Diana Trilling** is the wife of Professor Lionel Trilling and a well-known American critic in her own right. Her recent essay on Norman Mailer (November, 1962) aroused widespread attention.... **Margaret Shedd** is an American writer who lives in Mexico. A previous story, "I Hate You, Cruz Rivera" was published in ENCOUNTER in October, 1962.... **Harold R. Isaacs** is a well-known American writer on Afro-Asian affairs. He is the author of a study of *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution* and a book on American Images of China and India. . . . His present article is part of his researches at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for a forthcoming book on *The New World of Negro Americans* (John Day, New York).... **Irving Kristol** is a regular contributor to these pages. He is senior editor and Vice-President of Basic Books (Publishers) in New York.... **D. J. Enright,** poet and critic, is a Professor at the University of Malaya in Singapore. His article on *"The Empire of the English Tongue"* appeared in our December, 1958 issue; his critique of Svevo and Canetti in our June, 1961, issue.... **George Steiner** is a young American critic and scholar. He is at present a Fellow of Churchill College, Cambridge.... **Robert Oppenheimer,** the famous nuclear physicist, is Director of the Institute of Advanced Studies in Princeton, New Jersey. His recent contributions to ENCOUNTER include "On Science and Culture" (October, 1962) and "A Time of Sorrow and Renewal" (February, 1961).... **Christopher Mayhew** is the Labour Member of Parliament for East Woolwich. He is the author of a pamphlet called *Coexistence Plus* (Bodley Head, 4s. 6d.), Chairman of the East Europe Committee of the British Council and Vice-Chairman of the Great Britain-U.S.S.R. Society which has taken a leading part in the effort to improve cultural exchanges between East and West (although their most recent scheduled conference, called "The Search for Common Ground," was suddenly cancelled by the Russians on the grounds that they were "unavoidably busy").

On the cover: the portraits are, respectively, Governor George Wallace of Alabama, and James Baldwin.

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Carless driving

I know a man who has no car,
And often drives it fast and far,
But yet he never runs on Shell
—No car without goes quite as well.

Go well—go Shell

SHELL

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GREAT BRITAIN OR LITTLE ENGLAND?

John Mander

Two great decisions of the last twelve months have set the course of world history on to new lines. The first was Kennedy's, to challenge the locating of offensive weapons in Cuba. The second was de Gaulle's, to exclude Britain from the new European Community of the Six. In neither case was Britain ready or able to play a positive role. What has gone wrong with British policy since 1945 to place her in so passive and undignified a posture, and one which holds such grave dangers for her? It is the answer to such questions which Mr. Mander asks in this gravely disquieting and controversial book.

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